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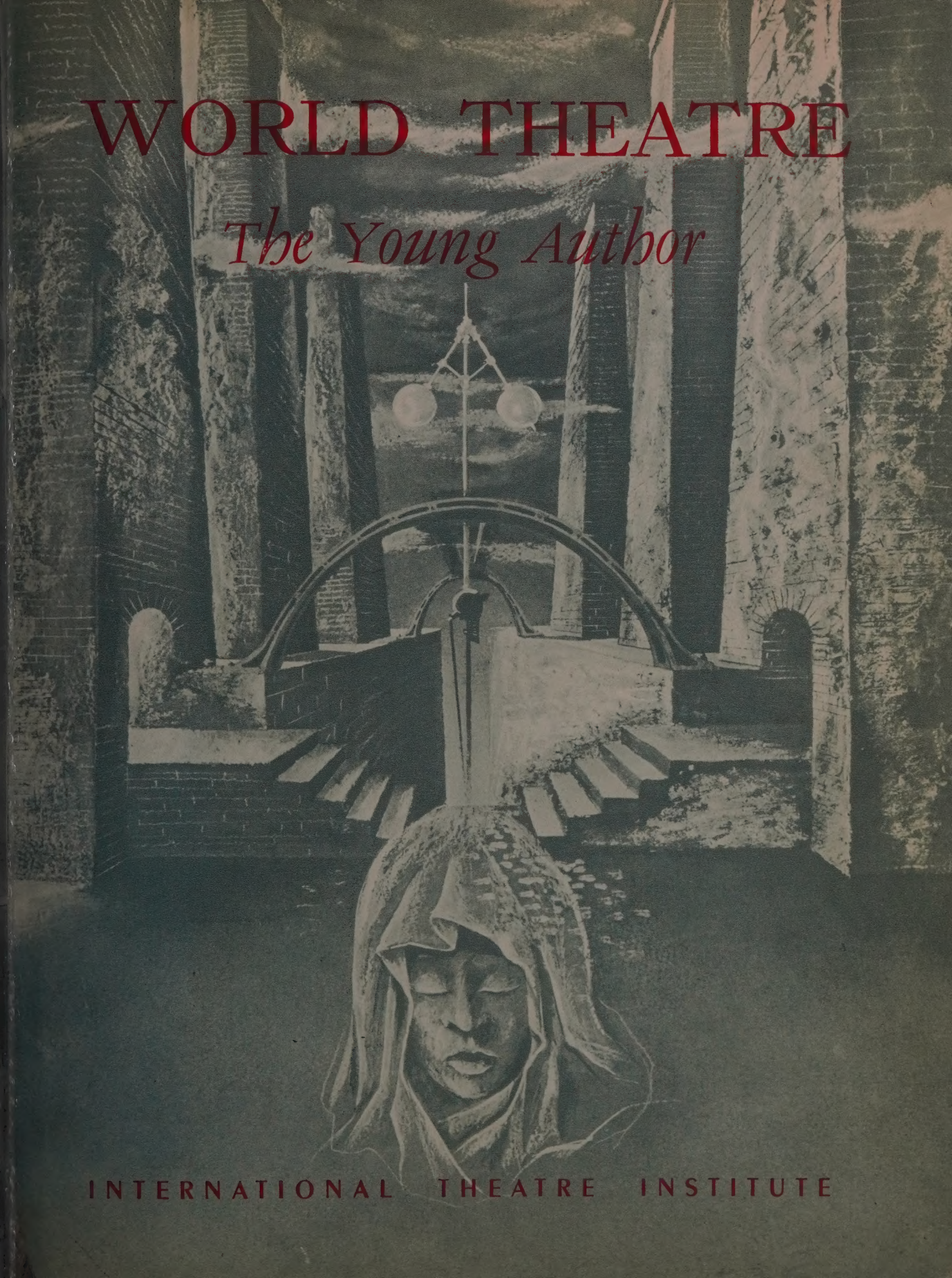

INTERNATIONAL THEATRE INSTITUTE

WORLD THEATRE

VOLUME I - NUMBER III

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IN COLLABORATION WITH UNESCO

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★

The cover is a tribute to Jan Carlo Menotti by Georges Wakhevitch.

ÉDITORIAL

Our review is changing its skin. The French and English versions of the main articles will now be printed face to face, which will make them easier to understand for those of our readers who are but slightly acquainted with either language. Another improvement is the general use of heliogravure, which will enable us in future to combine the illustrations with the text. A better balance, greater clarity and above all more life are the advantages we expect from this new formula. Does the reader agree?

Our publisher M. Perrin is to be congratulated, for despite bilingualism he has accomplished the miracle of fitting exactly the same amount of material into this number as into its predecessors.

★

At a time when the Generals of the Atlantic Pact are hurrying from Rome to Copenhague, and those of the communist states are no doubt doing the same between Warsaw and Prague, when the possibility of a third world war anchors itself insidiously in the mind and intellectual values are openly invited to give way before military necessity, it seems to us more urgent than ever to affirm our belief in the freedom of thought and theatre's international character. Our columns remain open to all artistic expression regardless of the country of its origin. For this reason our present number opens symbolically with a panorama of the Polish theatre in 1950.

★

The Oslo Congress recommended that the publications of the I.T.I. should receive priority. The Bulletin of World Premières and World Theatre were unanimously commended, and delegates from the remotest countries assured us of their enthusiastic cooperation.

There was one criticism however: a desire was expressed that our review should become a more living rostrum where various opinions front each other and that, with this end in view, more controversial subjects should be broached. The present number has been planned in this spirit.

The problem of forming and training young dramatists is everywhere acute. As a of fact all theatre people are agreed that a young dramatist can only acquire experience by having his plays produced, but in the present state of affairs managers can no longer afford to run risks with plays by inexperienced authors. How this vicious circle may be broken is a question we have asked in all four quarters of the globe.

An enquiry almost as extensive has enabled us to follow a successful play, in this case The Cocktail Party, *on its travels round the world.*

With our reader's encouragement such enquiries will be repeated and their scope enlarged.

So far each number of World Theatre has been by common consent, an improvement on the last. It would be idle to suppose that such progress can be limitless. We venture to believe however, that the present number constitutes yet another considerable step forward.

For the Editorial Committee,
RENÉ HAINAUX,
Editor.

POLOGNE 1950

★

THE POLISH THEATRE

MORDECAI GORELIK

PERHAPS the logical place to start one's playgoing in Poland is in Warsaw's Theatre Square. The immense Teatr Wielki (Grand Theatre) which fronts this square was reduced to ruins by the Nazis, but one wing has been entirely rebuilt in modern style, and this section, known as the Teatr Narodowy (National Theatre) houses a very successful folk opera, "The False Miracle," or "Cracovians and Mountaineers." Originally put on in 1794, it tells the story of a feud between the peasants of a town near Cracow and the people of the nearby Tatra Mountains. "Cracovians and Mountaineers" is the work of Wojciech Boguslawski (1760-1829), who is generally looked upon as the founder of the Polish theatre. His play was, and is, a patriotic spectacle with an emphasis on national unity. To the foreign visitor, however, it looks very much like a folk-musical of the type of "Oklahoma"

OU commencer notre tour de Pologne théâtral, sinon au Square du Théâtre, à Varsovie ? L'immense Teatr Wielki (Grand Théâtre), qui le bordait, a été détruit par les nazis et à sa place s'élève à présent le Teatr Narodowy (Théâtre National), d'un style évidemment plus moderne. On y donne avec grand succès *Le Prétendu Miracle* ou *Cracoviens et Montagnards,* opéra populaire dû à Wojciech Boguslawski (1760-1829), considéré comme le fondateur du théâtre polonais. Cette œuvre, créée en 1794, raconte l'histoire d'une haine corse entre des paysans de la région de Cracovie et des montagnards du Tatra. On lui a gardé son caractère de spectacle patriotique où l'accent est mis sur l'unité de la nation. Et pourtant, aux yeux d'un spectateur venant d'Amérique, cette pièce fait plutôt penser à une comédie musicale dans le genre d'*Oklahoma,* avec son déploiement de jolies filles, ses costumes chatoyants et ses somptueux décors. On doit ceux-ci à Wladyslaw Daszewski et la mise en scène à Léon Schiller.

Le Prétendu Miracle *ou* Cracoviens et Montagnards, *opéra de Wojciech Boguslawski. Mise en scène de Léon Schiller. Décors de Wladyslaw Daszewski. Théâtre National, Varsovie. 1950.*

The False Miracle *or* Cracovians and Mountaineers, *opera by Wojciech Boguslawski. Produced by Leon Schiller. Décors by Wladyslaw Daszewski. National Theatre, Warsaw. 1950.*

Lord Jim, *de Joseph Conrad. Mise en scène de Mieczyslaw Kotlarczyk. Décor de Tadeusz Ostaszewski. Théâtre Rapsodique, Cracovie. 1948.*

Lord Jim, *by Joseph Conrad. Produced by Mieczyslaw Kotlarczyk. Décor by Tadeusz Ostaszewski. Rhapsodic Theatre, Cracow. 1948.*

with a great many pretty girls, bright settings and colourful costumes. The show was designed by Wladyslaw Daszewski and staged by Leon Schiller, dean of Polish stage directors.

Schiller and Arnold Szyfman (who is organizing the new national opera) are two of the most seasoned men of the theatre at work in Poland to-day. Both may count themselves fortunate in surviving the German occupation. Szyfman escaped detection only by spending three years as a Baltic fisherman. Schiller, like so many other leading theatre people in eastern Europe, is a "graduate" of a Nazi concentration camp.

At the Teatr Polski (Polish Theatre), which Szyfman founded thirty-eight years ago, I saw "God, Emperor and Peasant" by the Hungarian dramatist Julius Hay. It may come as a surprise that modern Hungary has turned out plays other than the featherweight comedies of Molnar or Bus-Fekete. Hay's chronicle play, written in 1932, was banned in Hungary and was not produced there until three years ago. It recounts the political struggle between the Hungarian King Zygmunt and Pope John XXIII. Neither King nor Pope emerge with any lustre from this story, whose hero is the religious reformer John Huss. This play was also staged by Schiller but in a lumbering, David Belasco style of naturalism. For me the production was redeemed only by two scenes showing the gathering of Huss's peasant forces. These were exciting and memorable but altogether too brief.

Another Hungarian play concerned with more recent history, is being given at the Teatr Kameralny (Chamber Theatre). "The Case of Paul Eszterag" by Sandor Gergely is a fast-moving melodrama, in many scenes, of the revolutionary underground during the pre-war Horthy dictatorship. "Eszterag" has been produced with quiet understatement by Ludwik Rene, with sets which are full of atmosphere by Zenobiusz Strzelecki. The characters, notably those of Paul Eszterag the revolutionary (played by Mieczyslaw Milecki) and of Josef Kovacs his betrayer (played by Wladislaw Godik) have depth and plausibility. On the whole "Eszterag" stands considerably above the

Schiller et Arnold Szyfman (qui met sur pied le nouvel Opéra national) sont les deux hommes de théâtre les plus en vue de la Pologne actuelle. L'un et l'autre peuvent s'estimer heureux d'avoir survécu à l'occupation allemande. Pour échapper aux recherches, Szyfman a vécu pendant trois ans parmi les pêcheurs de la Baltique. Schiller, comme tant d'autres personnalités des scènes d'Europe orientale, est un « vétéran » des camps de concentration nazis.

C'est au Teatr Polski (Théâtre Polonais), fondé par Szyfman il y a trente-huit ans, que j'ai vu *Dieu, Empereur et Paysan,* du dramaturge hongrois Julius Hay. Peut-être sera-t-on surpris d'apprendre que la Hongrie moderne produit autre chose que les comédies légères d'un Molnar ou d'un Bus-Fekete. Cette pièce-ci, écrite en 1932 et interdite aussitôt, a pu être montée enfin il y a trois ans. Elle a pour sujet l'antagonisme politique du roi Zygmunt de Hongrie et du pape Jean XXIII. Ni l'un ni l'autre ne sort grandi de cette histoire dont le héros est le réformateur religieux Jean Huss. C'est Schiller aussi qui a mis en scène cette « chronique », mais dans un style naturaliste assez rebutant, à la David Belasco. Deux scènes, cependant, qui montrent le rassemblement des troupes de la paysannerie autour de Huss, rachètent le reste. Tableaux exaltants, mémorables, mais malheureusement trop brefs.

Une autre pièce hongroise — et historique — est jouée actuellement au Teatr Kameralny (Théâtre de Chambre). C'est *Le Cas de Paul Eszterag,* de Sandor Gergely, mélodrame mené tambour battant à travers de nombreux tableaux qui nous montrent le mouvement révolutionnaire clandestin sous la dictature de Horty. *Eszterag* bénéficie d'une sobre mise en scène de Ludwik Rene et de décors très suggestifs de Zenobiusz Strzelecki. L'interprétation, et notamment celle de Mieczyslaw Milecki (en Paul Eszterag, le révolutionnaire) et de Wladislaw Godik (le traître Josef Kovacs), l'interprétation, dis-je, est profondément sentie et sonne vrai. Dans l'ensemble, *Eszterag* se place bien au-dessus de la moyenne des drames patriotards : les « bons » y ont des moments de doute et de désespoir, et il arrive que les « mauvais » soient poussés par la peur plutôt que par la méchanceté pure.

Le théâtre où l'on donne *Eszterag* s'enorgueillit de son aménagement ultra-moderne (rideau gris foncé, murs et colonnes à cannelures, d'un ton gris ardoise). On l'inaugurait il y a un an. A la

run of hooray-for-our-side dramas: it has moments of self-doubt and despair, and its villains are occasionally moved by fear rather than by sheer malevolence.

The playhouse in which "Eszterag" is shown has an ultra-modern interior with a dark grey front curtain and fluted slate grey walls and columns. It is only a year old. Not a single undamaged theatre building was left standing in Warsaw at the end of the war; and most of them were entirely ruined. Many of the theatres in use at present are still makeshifts, for the most part converted movie houses. A typical instance is the Teatr Wspolczesny (Modern Theatre), where "The Germans" by a new Polish author, Leon Kruckowski, is now playing.

This drama, which probes the mentality of various types of Germans during the war, has a loosely constructed first act that consists of separate unrelated scenes. These merge later into a more conventionally integrated story. Taken by itself, the first scene is a deeply impressive short play in which a German non-commissioned officer is shown making a decision to shoot a Jewish child. This and other episodes are handled with surprising restraint, considering that Poland to-day probably surpasses any other European country in its hatred of everything German; in fact the author makes the point that there are two kinds of Germans—the liberal Professor Sonnenbruch and his sadistic officer son. "The Germans" is one of the most successful shows in Warsaw; every performance is crowded with standees.

Full houses, however, seem to be the rule today not only in Warsaw but throughout Poland. There has been a great increase in attendance, mainly on the part of the working class. Factory workers have an inducement to theatre going, since they receive a seventy-five per cent reduction in the price of tickets. Concessions are also made to school children and older students. The Polish theatres have no national booking agency like that of Umeni Lidu in Czecho-Slovakia: but each theatre has a booking secretary who maintains contact with the factories and mass organizations of his neighbourhood. Block booking is therefore the rule rather than the exception, sales at the box office being only supplementary.

I have not noticed that Polish audiences differ very much

fin de la guerre, il ne restait plus à Varsovie un seul théâtre indemne ; la plupart n'étaient que ruine. Aussi maintes salles utilisées en ce moment ne sont-elles que d'anciens cinémas aménagés tant bien que mal. Par exemple : le Teatr Wspolczesny (Théâtre Moderne), où l'on joue actuellement *Les Allemands*, du nouvel auteur polonais Léon Kruckowski.

Ce drame étudie diverses mentalités d'Allemands pendant la guerre. Le premier acte, assez décousu, comporte plusieurs tableaux sans relation les uns avec les autres. Par la suite, ces différentes actions se fondent dans un moule plus familier. Le premier épisode est à lui seul une petite pièce fort impressionnante, où l'on voit un sous-officier allemand décider d'abattre un enfant juif. Cette péripétie — et elle n'est pas la seule dans ce cas — est traitée avec une retenue surprenante si l'on songe que nul pays d'Europe ne hait autant tout ce qui est germanique que la Pologne d'aujourd'hui. En fait l'auteur distingue deux sortes d'Allemands : le professeur Sonnenbruch, un libéral, en face de son fils, le sous-officier sadique. *Les Allemands* sont un des spectacles les plus courus de Varsovie ; on vend autant de places debout que de places assises.

Il semble du reste que les théâtres soient aujourd'hui régulièrement bondés et non seulement à Varsovie, mais aussi dans toute la Pologne. Le public s'est accru considérablement, recruté pour une bonne part dans les classes laborieuses. Les ouvriers ont le stimulant d'une réduction de 75 % sur le prix des billets. Ecoliers et étudiants jouissent aussi de réductions. Les théâtres polonais n'ont pas d'agence nationale de location comme l' « Umeni Lidu » en Tchécoslovaquie ; aussi le secrétariat de chaque théâtre s'entend-il directement avec les usines et les organisations collectivistes de la région. Le blocage des places est donc de règle et la vente au guichet tout à fait accessoire.

Je n'ai pas remarqué de sensible différence entre le public polonais et celui de n'importe quel autre pays. Varsovie a beau être couverte de drapeaux rouges et de slogans, les gens rient, bavardent et s'interpellent dans les couloirs tout comme à Londres, à Paris ou à New-York. Rares sont les Polonais habillés de neuf, mais chacun semble tout de même avoir un costume ou une robe convenable pour le dimanche, les jours de fête et le théâtre (la toilette de soirée est inconnue). Le public est attentif et il a du goût. Peu d'applaudissements entre les actes ou en fin de spectacle ; par contre on applaudit souvent au cours de la représentation.

A un public toujours plus nombreux répond un nombre sans

Les Bas-Fonds, *de Maxime Gorki. Mise en scène de Léon Schiller. Décor d'Otta Axer. Théâtre Polski, Varsovie. 1949.*
The Lower Depths, *by Maxim Gorki. Produced by Leon Schiller. Décor by Otta Axer. Polishs Theatre, Warsaw. 1949.*

from audiences anywhere else. Warsaw may be decked with red flags and hortatory slogans, but the same chatter, smiles and greetings go on in theatre lobbies there as in London, Paris and New York. New clothing is still scarce in Poland, but everyone seems to have at least one good suit or dress for Sundays, holidays and theatregoing. Evening dress is unknown. Polish theatregoers are attentive and appreciative. There is however, very little applause between acts or at the final curtain; instead there is very frequent applause during the play itself.

To provide for the increased attendance, there has been a steady growth in the number of theatres. At the end of 1945 there were thirty-five professional theatres at work in Poland. To-day there are in all seventy-five, of which thirty-one are dramatic companies, and fifteen "attached" studio theatres and touring companies; the remainder being made up of six musical and vaudeville companies, five opera companies and eighteen puppet theatres. Amateur groups have increased enormously in number. (One young dramatist, who has written a play for amateurs, informs me that he is at present receiving royalties on it from one hundred and fifty different groups.) Warsaw, with a population of seven hundred thousand, exactly half its pre-war total, has twelve professional theatres, consisting of seven dramatic companies, one opera, one "youth" theatre and three puppet groups. Since Warsaw contains only nine film houses it may be the only large city in the world with more "legitimate" playhouses than movie theatres.

As to Polish repertory, its emphasis just now is on the

cesse croissant de salles. Fin 1945, il y avait en Pologne trente-cinq théâtres professionnels. Aujourd'hui, soixante-quinze ! Sur ce nombre, trente et un se consacrent à l'art dramatique, sans oublier quinze troupes itinérantes et « studios » ; le reste comprend six troupes d'opérette et de vaudeville, cinq compagnies d'opéra, ainsi que dix-huit théâtres de marionnettes. Quant aux troupes d'amateurs, elles prolifèrent. (Un jeune auteur me disait que pour une de ses pièces il avait touché des droits d'auteur de cent cinquante groupes différents.) Varsovie avec ses 700.000 habitants — exactement la moitié du chiffre d'avant guerre — compte douze théâtres professionnels, dont sept troupes de comédie, un opéra, un théâtre pour enfants et trois théâtres de marionnettes. Et comme Varsovie n'a que neuf cinémas, elle est peut-être la seule grande ville au monde à compter plus de salles de théâtre que de salles de cinéma.

Si l'on examine le répertoire, on constate que les classiques nationaux y sont pour l'instant à l'honneur. On redécouvre non seulement Boguslawski, mais aussi Aleksander Fredro, Michal Balucki, Stanislaw Moniuszki, Julius Slowacki et Gabriela Zapolska. Le Théâtre de Chambre de Varsovie présente *Mari et Femme,* de Fredro (1820). Au Nouveau Théâtre, *La Moralité de Madame Dulska,* de Zapolska, met en valeur le talent de Mieczyslawa Cwiklinska, comédienne très appréciée qui célèbre précisément ses cinquante ans de théâtre. Autre exhumation : *Club Cavallero,* de Balucki (1837-1901). C'est l'histoire d'un club de célibataires qui finissent par accepter l'idée du mariage et même par la trouver à leur goût. Cette comédie, manifestement inspirée de *Peines d'Amour Perdues,* a été montée par le Ludowy Teatr Muzyczny, dont la troupe, dirigée par le dynamique Jan Mrozinski, se produit dans une petite salle de Praga, faubourg ouvrier de Varsovie, de

LE THÉATRE CLASSIQUE SE PERPÉTUE ★ THE CLASSIC THEATRE IS GOING ON

Table ouverte, *de Michal Balucki. Mise en scène de Léon Luszczewski. Chorégraphie de Janina Mieczynska. Décors d'Iwo Gall. Théâtre Stefan Jaracz, Lodz. 1950.*

Open House, *by Michal Balucki. Produced by Leon Luszczewski Choreography by Janina Mieczynska. Décors by Iwo Gall. Stefan Jaracz Theatre, Lodz. 1950.*

Polish classics. Not only Boguslawski but Aleksander Fredro, Michal Balucki, Stanislaw Moniuszki, Juliusz Slowacki and Gabriela Zapolska are among the writers who are being resurrected. Warsaw offers Fredro's "Man and Wife" (1820) at the Kameralny. At the Teatr Nowy (New Theatre) Zapolska's "The Morals of Madame Dulska" serves as a vehicle for Mieczyslawa Cwiklinska, a favourite actress who is just now celebrating the half-century of her theatrical career.

"Club Cavallero" by Balucki (1837-1901) is another revival. This is the story of a bachelors' club which ends up with the bachelors accepting matrimony and even liking it. Balucki's comedy, which seems obviously indebted to "Love's Labour's Lost," has been staged by the Ludowy Teatr Muzyczny (Folk-Music Theatre), a company directed by the genial Jan Mrozinski and located in an intimate little playhouse in Praga, the working-class district across the Vistula. Its patrons, engagingly new to the theatre, are a treat to watch.

It is of course no coincidence or mere whim of fashion that accounts for the staging of so many Polish classics. I was curious to learn who decides what plays shall be shown in the Polish theatres. Continental companies are traditionally ruled by a triumvirate: the business manager, the artistic director and the dramaturge. (The latter functionary is unknown in the English or American theatre. He is a kind of glorified play-reader and script editor who takes the initiative in planning each season's repertory.) In Poland, these three officials are still in charge, but they are immediately responsible to a larger body or "colle-

l'autre côté de la Vistule. Ses habitués, tous néophytes, sont touchants à voir.

La faveur dont jouissent les classiques nationaux n'est évidemment pas l'effet du hasard ou d'un caprice de la mode. Je voulais savoir qui, dans les théâtres polonais, décide du choix des pièces. Traditionnellement, les compagnies d'Europe centrale sont dirigées par un triumvirat : l'administrateur, le directeur artistique et le « dramaturge » (ce dernier, inconnu en Amérique, joue le rôle d'un comité de lecture et établit le répertoire de chaque saison). En Pologne, ce personnel dirigeant est resté en place, mais il est directement responsable devant un comité plus large, ou « collège », qui comprend, outre ledit triumvirat, les principaux metteurs en scène de la troupe ainsi qu'un représentant du syndicat des artistes.

Si le théâtre polonais était aux mains de l'entreprise privée, là s'arrêterait le partage des responsabilités. Mais, par décret du 6 avril 1946, tous les théâtres professionnels ont été nationalisés. Le ministère de la Culture et des Arts comble leurs déficits et les aide à se développer. Il leur indique aussi une ligne de conduite générale et censure les pièces, au besoin. Le ministère délègue ses pouvoirs à la Direction générale des théâtres, opéras et orchestres. Comment la Direction générale envisage son rôle ressort de la déclaration que m'a faite Edward Csato, son directeur adjoint : « Nos théâtres sont des entreprises d'Etat fonctionnant au moyen des deniers publics. Ils sont responsables devant la collectivité, car ils s'adressent à l'audience la plus large et contribuent à son éducation, tant sur le plan culturel que sur le plan politique. Nos théâtres ne dépendent plus du tiroir-caisse. Ils ne se consacrent plus à l'opérette ni aux pièces de bas étage. Ils se vouent à des thèmes sérieux, montent les classiques du théâtre universel et du

LE THÉATRE RÉVOLUTIONNAIRE S'AFFIRME

Le Cas de Paul Ezterag, *de Sandor Gergely. Mise en scène de Ludwik René. Décors de Zenobiusz Strzelecki. Théâtre de Chambre, Varsovie. 1950.*

THE "POLITIC" THEATRE COMES TO LIFE

The Case of Paul Ezterag, *by Sandor Gergely. Produced by Ludwik René. Décors by Zenobiusz Strzelecki. Chamber Theatre, Warsaw. 1950.*

gium" which includes, in addition to themselves, the leading stage directors of the group, and one representative of the theatre trade union.

If the Polish theatre were in private hands this is about as far as executive responsibility could be spread. But there are no longer any privately-owned theatres in Poland. By the decree of April 6th 1946, all professional theatres became State institutions within the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Culture and Art, which makes up their deficits and assists them in their development. At the same time the Ministry lays down general principles for their guidance and, when it thinks necessary, censors their plays. All these functions are delegated by the Ministry of Culture to a subsiduary Generalna Dyrekcja Teatrow, Oper i Filharmonii (General Directorship of Theatres, Operas and Orchestras.) How the Generalna Dyrekcja sees its job is evident in the statement made to me by its director, Edward Csato:

"Our theatres are state enterprises operating with public funds. They have a public responsibility: they are addressed to the widest possible audience, serving that audience both culturally and politically. We have liberated our theatres from slavery to the box office. They no longer turn out operettas and cheap sensational plays. Instead they are devoted to serious themes, to staging the classics of the world and of our own country, and to the encouragement of plays dealing with our new life in factories, farms and mines."

In the field of stage technique itself the official point of view, again according to Csato, is "socialist realism." Socialist realism is a doctrine inherited from the theatres of Soviet Russia, where it has been an accepted policy since 1934; it denotes a whole philosophy of the theatre based on Marxist principles. Briefly it insists that the content of a stage presentation, whether drama or comedy, opera, ballet, pantomine or puppet show, must have a social and political background or perspective. The factors that go to make up production—acting, directing, design, music—are considered inseparable from the content, and must therefore be devoted to the same purpose. This leaves no room for eccentric productions: and even brilliance is applauded only if it serves a social theme. The epithet "formalistic" is applied to all work in which mere technique is exhibited at the expense of social comment. Condemned also are "naturalistic" productions—those which give a sort of snapshot of reality but contain no social analysis. The point of view of art for art's sake is regarded as at best futile and at worst decadent. Plays considered to be decadent or reactionary are subject to direct censorship or suppression, even if they are otherwise talented.

At the same time it would be rash to assume that there is anything "monolithic" about the interpretation of this Marxist code. Thus "All my Sons," a success in the eastern sector of Berlin, is considered reactionary in Moscow. "Death of a Salesman," I was informed, will not be shown in Prague, but is on the production schedule in Bratislava. The exact meaning of the term "socialist realism" is still under debate in the Polish press; and in Czecho-Slovakia and Poland quite conflicting views were expressed to me by Communist stage people. In some ways at any rate, the definition of socialist realism seems to be as fluid in interpretation as it is specific in theory. Much obviously depends on local conditions, and it may be that even more depends on to-day's fever chart of world tension.

Present Polish productions may be grouped under two headings: the preponderantly revolutionary and

théâtre polonais, favorisent les œuvres traitant de notre vie nouvelle dans les usines, les fermes et les mines. »

Dans le domaine technique, on préconise — toujours selon M. Csato — le « réalisme socialiste ». Cette doctrine est empruntée aux théâtres de l'Union Soviétique où elle fut adoptée dès 1934. Elle découle d'une conception du théâtre fondée sur les principes marxistes. En bref, elle soutient que toute représentation — drame, comédie, opéra, ballet, pantomime ou spectacle de marionnettes — doit avoir un arrière-plan ou un prolongement social et politique. Les différents éléments d'un spectacle — interprétation, mise en scène, décors, musique — sont considérés comme inséparables du contenu et doivent donc tendre au même but. Ceci ne laisse aucune place aux tentatives excentriques, et l'on ne tolère de virtuosité qu'au service d'un objectif social. L'épithète « formaliste » est appliquée à toute création où la technique pure se manifeste aux dépens de la valeur sociale. Sont également condamnés les spectacles « naturalistes », qui photographient la réalité, mais n'en font point l'analyse critique. L'art pour l'art est considéré au mieux comme futile, au pis comme décadent. Les pièces tenues pour décadentes ou réactionnaires sont censurées, voire interdites, même si elles sont excellentes à d'autres égards.

Il serait cependant erroné de croire que le code marxiste soit rigoureux au point de s'interpréter d'une manière absolue. Ainsi *All My Sons* (Keller et Fils), présenté avec succès dans le secteur oriental de Berlin, est considéré comme réactionnaire à Moscou. On me dit que *Death of a Salesman* (La Mort du Commis Voyageur) ne sera pas représenté à Prague, mais bien à Bratislava. Le sens exact de l'expression « réalisme socialiste » est encore discuté dans la presse polonaise. En Tchécoslovaquie et en Pologne, des gens de théâtre, tous communistes cependant, ont exprimé devant moi à ce sujet des vues diamétralement opposées. Le réalisme socialiste semble en tout cas être aussi fluide dans son application qu'il est précis en théorie. Cela dépend, bien entendu, des conditions locales et plus encore, peut-être, de la température des relations internationales.

Deux sortes de pièces se partagent actuellement l'affiche : celles qui vont dans le sens de la Révolution, celles qui n'ont qu'une valeur culturelle. Dans la première catégorie, où s'affirme la volonté de propagande, voisinent des œuvres nouvelles et des œuvres anciennes remaniées pour les besoins de la cause. Les reprises classiques sont destinées à élargir l'horizon des spectateurs, elles sont d'ordinaire moins dynamiques. Elles se rapprochent davantage des conceptions occidentales, leur intérêt doctrinal étant fort mince. Elles aussi, cependant, sont soumises au critère social.

Evidemment je simplifie, et il ne serait pas facile de désigner un échantillon parfait de l'une ou l'autre de ces catégories. Comment étiqueter, par exemple, *Le Vaudeville de Varsovie,* revue présentée au Théâtre de la Sirène, dans un style endiablé digne de Broadway, et qui a pour thème principal la reconstruction de Varsovie ? S'y mêle une intrigue amoureuse où l'ingénieur Karlowicz et son amie Zosia voient leur bonheur menacé par la tante Madzia, une propriétaire terrienne réactionnaire qui passe son temps à conspirer, en attendant « les temps meilleurs » (c'est-à-dire, dans son esprit, la chute du régime actuel). La propagande, ici, importe moins que les danses, les chants et l'allégresse partout répandue. (S'il faut en croire les librettistes, c'est à « deux cœurs et une chaumière » que — même en Pologne rouge — rêvent les amoureux.)

La différence entre œuvre « culturelle » et œuvre « révolutionnaire » pourrait être illustrée par deux pièces montées à Lodz et qui sont à peu près ce que j'ai vu de mieux dans tout le pays. (En Europe le théâtre n'est pas centralisé à l'extrême comme aux Etats-Unis, et il n'est pas rare de tomber sur une pièce de premier ordre dans une ville de province.)

Lors de mon passage à Lodz, donc, on donnait *Table Ouverte* de Michal Balucki, déjà cité à propos de son *Club Cavallero*. La scène se passe à Cracovie, aux environs de 1880. Mme Zelska,

La Brigade de Karhan, *de Vasek Kana. Mise en scène* «collective». *Décor d'Ewa Sobolt. Théâtre Nouveau, Lodz. 1949.*
Grinder Karhan's Brigade, *by Vasek Kana.* "Collective" *production. Décor by Ewa Sobolt. New Theatre, Lodz. 1949.*

the preponderantly cultural. The first sort, which is unmistakably propagandist, consists of new plays or of dramatic revisions of older ones. Revivals of the classics, on the other hand, are intended mainly to broaden the cultural horizon of the theatregoer, and are usually less dynamic. Plays of the second type come closer to western concepts, since their agitational content is at a minimum. However they too are judged by their social tendencies.

There is some risk of oversimplification in making a distinction of this kind: it is not so easy to isolate a simon-pure example of either tendency. How would one classify "Warsaw Vaudeville" for instance? This is a review at the Teatr Syrena (Mermaid Theatre) in a breezy definitely Broadway style, the main theme of which is the rebuilding of Warsaw. Its love interest consists of Engineer Karlowicz and his girl friend Zosia; its menace is Aunt Dadzia, an unregenerate land-lady who plots her mischief while waiting for "better times" (meaning the downfall of the present regime). Here the propaganda content is subordinate to the dances, lyrics and general high spirits of the production. (If we may credit the song writers, lovers go right on dreaming of rose-covered cottages even in Red Poland.)

Perhaps the difference between cultural and revolutionary plays can be illustrated by means of two productions I saw in Lodz, and which were among the best encountered in Poland. (Europe does not have the extreme centralization of the theatre that exists in the United States, and it is therefore not unusual to come across work of the first calibre in the smaller cities.)

At the Stefan Jaracz Theatre of Lodz at the time of my visit they were giving "Open House" by Michal Balucky, whose "Club Cavallero" I have already described. The events of "Open House" take place about the year 1880 in the city of Cracow. Madame Zelska, wife of a bank manager, is told by her friend the flighty Madame Wicherkowska that she has been too domestic and should blossom out into society. Impressed, Madame Zelska engages one Alfons Fikalski, who knows about such femme d'un banquier, se laisse influencer par son amie, l'évaporée Mme Wicherkowska, qui lui reproche de mener une vie par trop cloîtrée. Mme Zelska engage un certain Alfons Fikalski — spécialiste en la matière — pour organiser chez elle un grand bal. Au cours de la réception éclatent des incidents scandaleux auxquels Mme Zelska se trouve mêlée — en toute innocence. Le lendemain soir, elle est bien aise de retrouver sa vie paisible et le rideau tombe — comme il s'était levé — sur le tableau d'une famille heureuse réunie autour d'un piano.

Ce divertissement bénéficiait d'une présentation qui en augmentait encore le charme. Le metteur en scène Leon Luszczewski, le décorateur Iwo Gall et la chorégraphe Janina Mieczynska y évoquent toute une époque révolue. Ludwik Semploinski, qui a dans les soixante-dix ans, est un Fikalski sémillant et enjôleur. Les autres silhouettes ne sont pas moins réussies : M. et Mme Zelski, le vieux colonel Telesfor, un insupportable blanc-bec nommé Wrobelkowski, Mme Wicherkowska et son Othello de mari, Mme Ciuciumkiewicz, une invitée aux rondeurs volumineuses, et ses quatre filles si délicieusement bêtes, enfin une douzaine d'autres compositions de moindre importance mais tout aussi attachantes. Le bal lui-même est tout simplement prestigieux. Quel entrain ! Quelle élégance ! Que d'ardeurs tendres ! La salle tout entière semblait prendre part à cette brillante soirée.

Ce spectacle, transporté à New-York, n'y ferait pas plus penser au « réalisme socialiste » que le cher *Life with Father*. Quel contraste avec *La Brigade de Grinder Karhan,* production du Nouveau Théâtre de Lodz ! M'est avis que voilà une pièce à peu près inintelligible pour le public de Broadway.

Le Nouveau Théâtre, comme son nom l'indique, est un groupe de jeunes résolument orienté vers le prolétariat. *Karhan,* comédie écrite par un nouvel auteur tchèque, Vasek Kàna, traite de l'émulation socialiste dans un atelier de mécanique. Le personnage principal — Karhan — est un vieil ouvrier mécanicien dont le fils, Jarka, passe son temps à bricoler : il veut trouver un moyen d'accélérer la production de soupapes. Le vieux Karhan qui, sous l'ancien régime capitaliste, avait résisté à toute tentative de rationalisation, considère avec méfiance le dispositif mis au point par son fils. Fikès, un vieux tire-au-flanc, l'encourage dans cette atti-

things, to stage a grand ball at her home. In the course of this ball one or two scandals are revealed, in which Madame Zelska becomes innocently involved. By the end of the following day she is glad to return to her former placid existence, and the curtain falls, as it first rose, on a happy family scene round the piano.

The performance makes a delightful evening in the theatre. Leon Luszczewski, the director, Iwo Gall the designer, and Janina Mieczynska the choreographer have evoked a whole departed era. Ludwik Semploinski, an actor of over seventy, is a most ingratiating and agile Fikalski. Equally fine are the other character portraits: Monsieur and Madame Zelski, old Colonel Telesfor, an insufferable young bounder named Wrobelkowski, Madame Wicherkowska and her wildly jealous husband, Madame Ciuciumkiewicz, a lady guest of ample dimensions and her four wonderfully silly daughters, and a dozen smaller but no less fascinating parts. The ball itself is simply fabulous. Such enthusiasm! Such elegance! Such tender ardour and such stealing of spoons! I am certain that the whole audience feels itself part of that gala evening!

This show, transplanted to New York, would seem about as "socially realistic" as Broadway's own "Life with Father." Quite different is the Lodz New Theatre production of "Grinder Karhan's Brigade." This play, I am inclined to believe, would be very nearly unintelligible to a Broadway audience.

The New Theatre is what its name suggests in Poland—a young group with a distinctly working-class orientation; and "Karhan," a comedy by a new Czech author, Vasek Kana, is on the subject of competition in a machine shop.

Henri VI à la Chasse, *de Wojciech Boguslawski. Adaptation de Zbigniew Krawczykowski. Mise en scène de Maryna Broniewska. Décors de Wieslaw Lange et Aleksander Jedrzejewski. Costumes de Jadwiga Przeradska. Théâtre dramatique d'Etat, Wroclaw. 1950.*

Henry VI at the Hunt, *by Wojciech Boguslawski. Adapted by Zbigniew Krawczykowski. Produced by Maryna Broniewska. Décors by Wieslaw Lange and Aleksander Jedrzejewski. Costumes by Jadwiga Przeradzka. State Drama Theatre, Wroclaw. 1950.*

The name-character, is a veteran machinist whose son Jarka keeps tinkering at an invention to speed up the tude. Mais lorsque Jarka réussit à battre tous les records avec sa nouvelle invention, le père se sent atteint dans son orgueil professionnel. Il se met rageusement au travail et, grâce à son habileté, il parvient avec sa vieille machine, à distancer son fils. Mais celui-ci rentre en lice, améliore son rendement et le père doit finalement s'avouer vaincu. Alors Jarka lui fait remarquer que s'il mettait la nouvelle machine au service de son savoir-faire, la production de la fabrique pourrait encore augmenter.

J'ai trouvé cette pièce intéressante à bien des égards. Elle vient à son heure dans les pays communistes non seulement parce qu'elle traite de l'ouvrier et de la vie d'usine, mais aussi parce qu'elle donne une forme dramatique à l'objectif communiste d' « atteindre et de dépasser les taux de production capitalistes ». Et pourtant ce n'est pas une œuvre de propagande stupide. L'auteur sait bien que l'on ne change pas du jour au lendemain les habitudes des vieux ouvriers et qu'il leur faudra du temps pour se mettre en tête que les instruments de production ne sont plus propriété privée. Les dialogues de Kàna, fort bien mis en valeur au Nouveau Théâtre, sont d'un humour savoureux, propre aux milieux ouvriers. La scène fourmille de types d'ouvriers croqués sur le vif, à commencer par l'irascible père Karhan — Josef Pilarski joue ce rôle à merveille — et ce vieux bougre de Fikès, magnifiquement incarné par Stanislaw Lapinski.

Le programme m'apprit que la pièce avait été montée dans une « mise en scène collective ». Ce n'est pas la seule innovation introduite dans les théâtres d'Europe orientale. Il est d'usage ici de faire des répétitions en costumes devant un public d'invités à qui l'on demande, après le spectacle, de formuler critiques et suggestions. On invite généralement les « responsables aux loisirs » des organisations collectives, des clubs, des syndicats, ou des usines, qui, ensuite, se chargent de la publicité dans leur secteur, souvent par voie d'avis de service.

Faute de place, je ne puis que mentionner brièvement quelques autres pièces vues en province. A Wroclaw, *Un Rêve de Goldfaden* était présenté par la talentueuse compagnie du Théâtre Juif. Ce rêve extravagant, musical et exotique est un hommage rendu à Abraham Goldfaden (1840-1908), dramaturge et compositeur juif polonais fort aimé du public. Des péripéties, des danses, des chansons tour à tour mélancoliques et allègres mènent les personnages depuis New-York jusqu'en Pologne. La troupe, qui joue en yiddish, possède à Wroclaw sa propre salle — le très moderne Théâtre Rachel Kaminska — mais elle est obligée de constamment se déplacer, ne trouvant pas sur place un public suffisant. N'oublions pas que 98 % des Israélites de Pologne ont été assassinés ou dispersés par les Nazis.

C'est à Wroclaw également, mais au Théâtre d'Etat, que j'ai vu un très intéressant *Henry VI à la Chasse,* autre comédie patriotique de Boguslawski, jouée avec esprit par un groupe de jeunes dont aucun n'avait plus de vingt-huit ans. La mise en scène de Maryna Broniewska s'inspire ingénieusement des décors et des costumes dessinés par l'auteur lui-même pour la création de son œuvre, en 1792.

Le plus important théâtre professionnel de Cracovie est le Théâtre slovaque où une attrayante représentation du *Pygmalion* de Bernard Shaw faisait les délices d'une salle comble. Parmi les autres compagnies de la même ville, il faut citer un groupe expérimental assez curieux, le Théâtre Rhapsodique, qui donne des dramatisations d'œuvres littéraires. « Récitals » serait peut-être un terme plus exact que « dramatisations ». J'y ai vu une adroite présentation d'*Eugène Onéguine* sur un plateau sans décors, où les acteurs, presque immobiles, déclamaient les vers de Pouchkine. Une atmosphère romantique baignait la salle. Nous étions loin du réalisme socialiste ! A Cracovie encore, le Théâtre du Jeune Spectateur donnait *Le Cercle de Craie,* dans un style néo-chinois. Sobre mise en scène de Wladyslaw Dobrowolski, chorégraphie très originale de J. Strzembosz.

production of valves. Old Karhan, who has resisted any kind of speedup under the former "capitalist" dispensation, regards his son's device with suspicion. His attitude is reinforced by another old-timer Fikes, who has spent a lifetime dodging hard work. When Jarka succeeds in breaking all records with the invention, his father's professionnal pride is outraged. Furiously he sets to work and, with no more than his old machine and his manual skill, beats Jarka's time. Jarka returns to the fray however, outdoing his previous record; whereupon the old man has to admit himself beaten. But Jarka now points out that with a combination of the new machine and his father's skill the factory can go on to a still higher output.

According to the play-programme, this comedy received a "collective stage direction." Group directing is not the only novelty to be found in the stage practice of eastern Europe. It is customary to give dress rehearsals for an invitation audience, who are asked to make criticism and suggestions after the show. The guests are usually the welfare officers of mass organizations, clubs, unions or factories who afterwards publicize the show among their members—often over the factory communications system.

Lack of space permits only brief mention of some of the other plays I attended in the provinces. At Wroclaw the talented company of the Teatr Zydowski (Jewish Theatre) was doing "A Goldfaden Dream," an exotic musical extravaganza in the form of a dream, which pays tribute to the beloved Polish-Jewish dramatist and composer Abraham Goldfaden (1840-1908). In an action that wanders from New York to Poland, Goldfaden's stage characters take part in adventures, songs and dances that are by turns melancholy and hilarious. In Wroclaw the Teatr Zydowski has a playhouse of its own—the modern Rachel Kaminska Theatre: but with ninety-eight per cent of Poland's Jews murdered or dispersed by the Nazis, the remaining Jewish audience is so small that this Yiddish-speaking company has to keep constantly on tour.

One of the most interesting productions in Poland is the Wroclaw State Dramatic Theatre's "Henry VI at the Hunt," another of Boguslawski's patriotic comedies. Staged by a woman director, Maryna Broniewska, this revival makes imaginative use of the author's own scene and costume designs for the original production in 1792. It is played with zest by a young company none of whom are over the age of twenty-eight.

At the Slowacki Theatre in Cracow an attractive production of Bernard Shaw's "Pygmalion" was delighting a packed house. The Slowacki is Cracow's largest professional theatre. Among the city's other stage companies is a curious experimental group, the Teatr Rapsodyczny (Rhapsodic Theatre), which gives dramatizations of literary works. "Recitals" is perhaps a better word than "dramatizations": the "Eugene Onegin" I saw there was ingeniously produced on a platform stage and without settings, but was almost immobile, with the actors declaiming Pushkin's lines to the audience. Socialist realism here seems non-existent: instead the theatre appears to be steeped in an atmosphere of adolescent romanticism. The Teatr Mlodego Widza (Theatre of the Young Spectator), also in Cracow, was showing the "Chalk Circle" in neo-Chinese style, directed with a fine reticence by Wladyslaw Dobrowolski and with imaginative choreography by J. Strzembosz.

Some reference should be made to the Polish marionnette and puppet companies whose work is nothing less than superb. In at least two places—the Teatr Groteska (Grotesque Theatre) Cracow, and the Teatr Dzieci Warszawy (Warsaw Children's Theatre), puppets are

Un mot également des théâtres de marionnettes, dont le travail est de toute beauté. Dans au moins deux d'entre eux — au Théâtre du Grotesque de Cracovie, et au Théâtre pour Enfants de Varsovie — les fantoches sont mêlés à des acteurs en chair et en os et l'effet obtenu est parfaitement homogène. Ce sont des poupées d'un genre plus traditionnel — et rien que des poupées — qui composent les beaux spectacles du Théâtre Gulliver et du Théâtre des Amandes Bleues, tous deux à Varsovie. Notons en passant que les marionnettes polonaises, tout comme celles de Java, sont montées sur des bâtons, et maniées par en dessous. Ce système permet un jeu beaucoup plus souple qu'on ne serait tenté de le croire.

Un Rêve de Goldfaden, *d'après Abraham Goldfaden. Mise en scène de Jakub Rotbaum. Décors de Jedrzejewski et Lange. Costumes de Jadwiga Przeradzka. Chorégraphie de Sylwia Swen. Théâtre Juif, Wroclaw. 1950.*

A Goldfaden Dream, *after Abraham Goldfaden. Produced by Jakub Rotbaum. Décors by Jedrzejewski and Lange. Costumes Jadwiga Przeradzka. Choreography by Sylwia Swen. Jewish Theatre, Wroclaw. 1950.*

Ainsi donc le théâtre polonais a le cœur à l'ouvrage, et de nouveaux cadres sont rapidement formés pour en assurer l'essor. Son point faible est sans aucun doute le manque de nouvelles pièces de qualité. Mais c'est là un mal universel. Le métier d'auteur dramatique — plus que toute autre création littéraire — exige une lente, une profonde assimilation ; or nos dramaturges, même les plus doués, même les plus expérimentés, ont été désorientés par la bousculade des événements au cours des trente dernières années. En Occident, on peut encore continuer à broder sur des thèmes et des types bien établis; mais dans des pays comme la Pologne, on demande à l'auteur dramatique d'ouvrir des voies nouvelles ; il doit traiter avec sérieux du prolétaire et du paysan, du communiste et du contre-révolutionnaire, et il lui faut envisager caractères et situations du point de vue d'un public qui n'est plus celui des classes moyennes. Pareille tâche exigerait un Shakespeare doublé d'un Gorki. Cet oiseau rare n'a pas encore fait son apparition.

Dès lors on comprend pourquoi en Pologne les classiques du cru tiennent tant de place dans les programmes. Les grands noms

Le Pêcheur et le Poisson, *d'Alexandre Pouchkine. Pièce pour marionnettes. Mise en scène de Janina Kilian-Stanislawska. Décors d'Adam Kilian. Théâtre des Amandes Bleues, Varsovie. 1950.*

The Fisherman and the Fish, *by Aleksander Pushkin. A play for marionnettes. Produced by Janina Kilian-Stanislawska. Décors by Adam Kilian. Theatre of the Blue Almonds, Warsaw. 1950.*

combined with living actors in a completely unified effect. I also visited beautiful all-doll productions of the more traditional type at the Gulliver Theatre and the Teatr Niebieskie Migdaly (Blue Almonds Theatre), both in Warsaw.

All in all the Polish theatre is hard at work and is training new forces for its rapid expansion. Without doubt its greatest weakness is a shortage of native modern scripts. This lack of good plays is of course world-wide. Dramatic writing, more than writing of any other kind, requires a tremendous amount of gestation in the mind of the writer; and the rush of events of the past thirty years has taxed even our most gifted and experienced playwrights beyond their limits. In the West one may still improvise on established themes and characters. But in countries like Poland the dramatist is expected to break new ground: he must deal seriously with the proletarian and the peasant, the Communist and the "counter-revolutionary." He is asked to re-evaluate character and situation from the point of view of an audience that is no longer middle-class.

It is therefore understandable that in Poland the native classics hold the centre of the stage. World classics are also well represented, with Shakespeare, Molière and Shaw leading. Very few of the current plays of America or western Europe are being shown. In view of the state of international affairs, that is hardly surprising: we, in turn, ignore all the recent productions of Poland. Until such time as the general tension subsides, theatrical relations will also continue under a strain.

du théâtre universel y sont également bien représentés, avec, en tête, Shakespeare, Molière et Shaw.

Mais l'on voit très peu des pièces à succès d'Europe occidentale ou d'Amérique. Etant donné l'évolution des relations internationales, il n'y a rien là de surprenant : de notre côté, n'ignorons-nous pas tout des récentes créations polonaises ? Tant que durera la guerre froide, les relations théâtrales risquent fort de ne pas s'améliorer.

★ ★

Mordecai Gorelik

décorateur de théâtre aux U. S. A. Auteur de *New Theatres for Old,* un ouvrage classique de l'histoire du théâtre moderne. A l'invitation de la National Theatre Conference (U. S. A.), Gorelik a récemment parcouru l'Europe pour recueillir les matériaux de son prochain ouvrage : *Europe on Stage.* C'est un chapitre de ce livre qu'il a détaché ici pour nous.

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theatre designer in the U. S. A. Author of "New Theatres for Old," a classic on the history of the modern theatre. At the invitation of the National Theatre Conference (U. S. A.), Gorelik has recently toured Europe to collect material for his next book: "Europe on Stage." He gives us here a forecast of one of the chapters in it.

MORDECAI GORELIK

CAN THE CRAFT OF PLAYWRITING BE LEARNED? HOW CAN BEGINNERS BE HELPED?

THE difficulties which young dramatists experience in getting launched now appear to have reached a crisis, especially in the big capitals. In London, Paris and New York, at all events, one cannot expect theatre directors to mobilize considerable funds, the best actors, and an audience, and offer their stages as a trial ground for a budding author.

The young poet can progress by dint of writing verses, and the young painter by painting pictures, but everyone knows the young dramatist can only progress through contact with the public. Indeed he is commonly advised to have one or two plays produced to help him judge for himself of his weaknesses! It is through his first failures that a young dramatist establishes his technique, and begins to "feel" the public sufficiently to write a successful play.

How is this vicious circle to be broken? This is the question to which we sought an answer.

First of all we asked Walter Prichard Eaton to tell us about the playwriting courses in numerous universities of the United States, where young dramatists serve their first apprenticeship. Used as a stimulant this article was then sent, accompanied by a questionnaire, to the most eminent dramatists, with a request that they should make known their views on the American experiment, as well as the remedies they themselves proposed, and that they should add, for the benefit of our readers, a brief account of their own beginnings.

It will be seen from what follows that the results of this first international enquiry outstripped our fondest hopes.

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LE MÉTIER D'AUTEUR DRAMATIQUE PEUT-IL S'APPRENDRE? COMMENT AIDER LES DÉBUTANTS?

LES difficultés que rencontrent les jeunes auteurs dramatiques pour accéder à la carrière paraissent atteindre actuellement un stade aigu, et particulièrement dans les grandes capitales. A Londres, à New-York et à Paris, en tout cas, on ne peut attendre des directeurs de théâtre qu'ils mobilisent des capitaux souvent considérables, les meilleurs comédiens et le public... pour offrir leur plateau comme terrain d'expérience à un auteur débutant.

Or, si le jeune poète peut progresser à force d'écrire des vers, le jeune peintre à force de brosser des tableaux, nul n'ignore que le jeune dramaturge, lui, ne progresse qu'au contact du public. Aussi lui recommande-t-on communément de faire d'abord jouer une ou deux pièces, ce qui lui permettra, ajoute-t-on, de juger lui-même de ses faiblesses! C'est sur ses premiers échecs qu'un jeune auteur assure son métier et commence à « sentir » suffisamment le public pour composer une œuvre réussie.

Ce cercle vicieux peut-il être rompu?... C'est la question que nous avons voulu poser.

Tout d'abord, nous avons demandé à Walter Prichard Eaton de nous parler de ces cours de « playwriting » pratiqués dans de nombreuses universités des U. S. A. et où de jeunes auteurs dramatiques font leurs premières armes. Utilisé comme excitateur, cet article fut alors envoyé, accompagné d'un questionnaire, aux écrivains de théâtre les plus éminents, en les priant de faire connaître leur opinion sur cette initiative américaine ainsi que les remèdes qu'eux-mêmes proposent et d'y joindre pour l'édification de nos lecteurs un bref récit de leurs débuts.

Que les résultats de cette première enquête internationale aient dépassé nos espérances, on en jugera sur-le-champ.

COURSES IN PLAYWRITING IN THE U. S. A.

BY WALTER PRICHARD EATON

WHAT is generally conceeded to be the first course in playwriting offered in an American college, or perhaps in any college, was organized by Professor George Pierce Baker at Harvard University in 1907. This pioneer departure from the accepted method of collegiate drama study might have attracted far less attention than it did if one of Professor Baker's first students, the late Edward Sheldon, had not sold his first play, "Salvation Nell," to Mrs. Fiske. A rash of publicity broke out, not entirely welcome to the staid old puritan college. Broadway was openly scornful of the idea that playwriting can be taught but scores of young men (and women, for the course was open to Radcliffe students) were eager to be enrolled. In the next decade-and-a-half "English 47," as the course was labelled attracted such students as George Abbot, Eugene O'Neill, Sidney Howard, Philip Barry, S. N. Behrman, Thomas Wolf and Theresa Helburn. Three of the founders of the Theatre Guild were Baker graduates. After the success of O'Neill, Barry, Sidney Howard and many others, the professional theatre stopped its sneers at the idea that playwriting can be taught, or at any rate wisely guided, and a new interest in drama study through practice led to the establishment of drama departments in scores of colleges, in many of which courses in playwriting were incorporated.

In spite of Professor Baker's success in equipping playwrights to work in the professional theatre, Harvard did not take kindly to his course. As everybody knows a playwright learns most from seeing his play acted before an audience. To act the plays written in "47" took time and energy, and attracted much attention to what Harvard may have considered undignified, or even "unscholarly." At any rate, the university provided Professor Baker with no proper equipment, and in 1925 he went to Yale, where a fine theatre was built for him and he could conduct a school in which all branches of theatrical art could be studied, on a professional level. Yale now turns out directors, designers, technicians, actors, as well as playwrights, all subjected to some knowledge of each branch of theatrical art. But the base of the school is still the playwright, as the base of a vital theatre is a constantly renewed contemporary repertoire.

How did Professor Baker, and how do his many successors in several score colleges, teach playwriting? Mr. Baker would sometimes smile and agree with those who said it cannot be taught—by which he meant that no teacher can give a student the natural gift for playmaking, any more than for painting or music. Nor did

LE tout premier cours de composition dramatique fut celui qu'instaura, en 1907, à l'Université de Harvard, le professeur George Pierce Baker. Et peut-être cette innovation aurait-elle eu un moins grand retentissement si l'un des élèves du professeur Baker, Edward Sheldon, n'avait vendu sa première œuvre, *Salvation Nell,* à Mme Fiske. La nouvelle fit grand bruit. Publicité qui n'était pas pour séduire la vénérable et puritaine Université ; et, de son côté, Broadway trouvait saugrenue l'idée d'enseigner l'art d'écrire une pièce. Mais des dizaines de jeunes gens et de jeunes filles brûlaient de se faire admettre aux cours de M. Baker. Pendant les quinze ans qui suivirent il forma des gens de la qualité d'Eugène O'Neill, George Abbot, Sidney Howard, Philip Barry, S. N. Berhman, Thomas Wolf et Thérésa Helburn.

Ainsi, trois parmi les fondateurs du Théâtre Guild furent des élèves de M. Baker. Après le succès d'O'Neill, de Barry, de Sidney Howard, les tenants du théâtre professionnel cessèrent leurs sarcasmes, et l'intérêt qu'on prit à l'étude pratique du théâtre eut pour conséquence l'établissement d'un département d'art dramatique dans de nombreuses universités.

Malgré la réussite du professeur Baker, Harvard ne voyait pas son cours d'un bon œil. Jouer les pièces écrites dans la classe 47 exigeait du temps et des efforts et attirait l'attention sur ce que l'Université considérait comme indigne d'elle. Harvard ne fournit au professeur rien de ce dont il avait besoin. En 1925 il quitta Harvard pour Yale, où un beau théâtre fut construit à son usage et où il put diriger un département où toutes les branches de l'art dramatique étaient étudiées professionnellement. Yale forme maintenant encore des metteurs en scène, des décorateurs, des techniciens, des acteurs, tout aussi bien que des auteurs dramatiques. Mais l'école tend surtout à former des auteurs. C'est la base même de l'enseignement, comme la base d'un théâtre qui veut vivre doit être un répertoire contemporain constamment renouvelé.

Comment le professeur Baker enseignait-il la composition dramatique ? Comment font ses multiples successeurs dans des vingtaines d'universités ? M. Baker approuvait en souriant ceux qui lui disaient qu'un tel art ne peut s'enseigner : il entendait par là qu'aucun professeur ne saurait conférer à un élève des dons d'auteur, pas plus que ceux de peintre ou de musicien. Et il ne s'attendait point à voir tous ses élèves devenir des dramaturges professionnels. Une petite fraction tout au plus ; dans tous les arts il y a beaucoup d'appelés, peu d'élus. Ce que M. Baker déclarait possible, c'est de montrer à l'apprenti auteur comment convertir en termes de théâtre ce que son instinct lui a fait adopter comme sujet. Il désirait aussi rendre claires les « lois » (si l'on veut les appeler ainsi) qui exigent qu'une pièce se concentre dans une progression logique, chaque scène étant commandée par ce

he expect more than a small fraction of his students to develop into professionnal dramatists. In all the arts many come but few are chosen. What he declared can be done is to show the potential dramatist how to convert what his instinct tells him is dramatic material into theatrical terms, to help him understand the "rules" (if you wish to call them that) which decree that a play must be condensed into a series of logical progressions, each scene evolving from what has passed and rousing desire to witness what must follow. (The art to conceal the essential mechanics is one that comes to most only with considerable practice.) It is surprising how often the students with natural gifts for character drawing, for dialogue, for effective situation, even if they are fascinated by the theatre, at first approach playwriting from a story teller's, or novelist's, point of view. They have to be helped to realize that the story tells what has happened, the play must show it happening. As a popular American dramatist once phrased the "law" of playwriting: "Don't tell 'em: show 'em."

It may be that one reason why so few novelists succeed in the theatre is because they have too long visualized their stories as taking place in the wide world, not on the limited space of a stage. The novelist can describe and narrate. The dramatist must pack his story into one small space, condense it in time, reduce narration to the vanishing point, and at all times as he works he must visualize his characters not out in the wide world, but as actors on a stage. He must know where they are at any given moment, why they are there in relation to other characters, how to get them off stage and on again, how to direct each speech so that it registers some effect on other characters, and hence on the audience. The sooner a young dramatist learns thus to visualize his story, the sooner will he become a master of his craft. And the longer a man has practised story or novel writing, the harder will it be for him to make this approach.

All this, of course, can be told to the young dramatist, demonstrated to him by examples in the works of well known playwrights, and then by reading his own efforts to a group of fellow students and when possible acting them before an audience. It was Mr. Baker's method, now generally followed, to meet with his class (in his case restricted to a dozen students) around a table for two-hour sessions, usually twice a week. After the class has been going long enough for the students to have written plays, or portions of plays, the instructor at each session reads a student Ms., the class listens and then discusses the play for clarity, truthfulness, character interest, logical development, dialogue, climax, and so on. The so called principles of playwriting, previously set forth to the class or studied in text books, are now practically applied, as the script gives occasion. The instructor guides the discussion, which like all human discussions may tend to wander far afield, and later in private conference amends or reinforces, and guides the author in the process of rewriting. It is always interesting to see how the instinctive reactions of the class in their faces and attitudes reflect whether they are roused to interest or have slipped into indifference. The young author generally observes this, and studies to find the reason, especially for indifference.

But class readings and discussions are only partial measures in showing a playwright the merits and demerits of his script. The test must come in rehearsals, when he sees how often he has not anticipated stage difficulties, and when he sometimes painfully learns that he has to get along with actors and directors who constantly want

qui vient de se passer et devant susciter dans le public le désir d'en connaître davantage. (L'art de dissimuler adroitement le mécanisme essentiel ne peut être compris par l'étudiant qu'après beaucoup d'exercices.) L'élève, même s'il possède des dons de dialogue, d'invention, de caractérisation, commence presque toujours par adopter le point de vue du conteur ou du romancier. Il faut lui faire comprendre que si le conteur rapporte ce qui *est arrivé,* l'auteur dramatique montre ce qui *arrive.* Un auteur populaire l'a dit : « Ne racontez pas. Faites voir. »

Si peu de romanciers réussissent au théâtre, cela vient sans doute de ce qu'ils ont trop pris l'habitude de voir leur histoire se dérouler à travers le monde et non dans l'espace limité d'un plateau. Le romancier décrit et narre, mais le dramaturge condense son histoire dans le temps, réduit la narration à l'extrême et doit avoir constamment ses personnages devant lui, non pas éparpillés dans l'étendue, mais sous les espèces d'acteurs groupés sur un plateau. Il faut qu'il sache exactement où ils sont à chaque instant, pour quelle raison ils sont là et pas ailleurs, comment les faire entrer en scène ou les faire sortir, comment orienter chaque réplique pour qu'elle agisse directement sur les autres personnages et, partant, sur les spectateurs. Ce n'est que lorsqu'il parviendra à « visualiser » l'aventure qu'il a inventée qu'il sera vraiment maître de son art.

Tout ceci, bien sûr, on peut le dire à un apprenti dramaturge. On peut le lui démontrer par des exemples tirés d'auteurs connus. On peut ensuite lire ses essais à un groupe de condisciples et, si possible, les faire interpréter devant un vrai public. La méthode de M. Baker, encore généralement suivie, consistait à grouper quelques élèves (jamais plus de douze à la fois) autour d'une table pour des séances de deux heures, en général deux fois par semaine. Dès le moment où les élèves ont eu le temps d'écrire une petite pièce, ou tout au moins un fragment de pièce, l'instructeur, à chaque séance, lit l'œuvre d'un étudiant. Ensuite la discussion est ouverte : la classe examine tour à tour la clarté de l'œuvre, sa vraisemblance, les mobiles des personnages, la progression dramatique, dilemme, crise, etc. Les principes préalablement étudiés sont ici examinés dans leur application chaque fois que le texte en fournit l'occasion. L'instructeur guide la discussion — qui aurait tendance à s'égarer — et plus tard, au cours d'un entretien privé, il corrige ou confirme ces premiers jugements et aide l'auteur à refaire ce qui est défectueux. Il est toujours intéressant d'observer les réactions instinctives des auditeurs : leur attitude, l'expression du visage indiquent s'ils sont accrochés ou s'ils s'ennuient. En général, le jeune auteur y est très sensible et essaie d'en trouver la raison.

Mais lectures et discussions ne suffisent pas. Vient l'épreuve des répétitions. Ici le jeune auteur pourra constater comme il a peu prévu telle ou telle difficulté scénique. Il apprendra à ses dépens comment il faut composer avec les acteurs et les metteurs en scène, qui veulent toujours récrire sa pièce. Puis viendra la représentation : à la consternation de son auteur, la pièce peut fort bien se révéler tout autre chose que ce qu'il avait conçu. Il est rare qu'un jeune dramaturge puisse prévoir l'effet qu'une scène fera sur le public. Et c'est bien pourquoi la représentation des pièces d'étudiants est considérée comme un élément essentiel de notre enseignement. L'élève y fait son apprentissage dans une atmosphère cordiale, alors que dans un théâtre professionnel l'inexpérience et l'échec l'auraient peut-être définitivement découragé.

Nos professeurs se fondent davantage sur la pratique et la critique individuelle que sur les manuels. Surtout en matière de théâtre. Cependant, depuis que le professeur Baker a condensé ses principes dans un livre intitulé *Dramatic Technique* (Technique dramatique), pas mal d'autres livres ont suivi. Certains prétendent enfermer tout le secret du théâtre en une formule. Mais d'autres ont une réelle valeur et les étudiants les consultent avec avidité.

WALTER PRICHARD EATON

to rewrite his play (ideally he playwriting instructor should also be the director); and then in performance before an audience, when sometimes to his chagrin the play emerges as something different from his conception. It is a rare young dramatist indeed who can foresee, in his early efforts, what effect his scenes will have on an audience. He learns by trial and error—and never completely to the end of his days. That is one reason why American courses in playwriting consider the production of student plays so important. The student has a chance to learn by experience with audiences under friendly auspices, before he launches out into the professional theatre where inexperience and failure can be perhaps fatally discouraging.

Most successful teachers of all forms of composition in America do not rely greatly on text books, but rather on practice and personal criticism. This is true in teaching playwriting. But since Professor Baker embodied his principles in a book, called "Dramatic Technique," many other text books have been issued. Some of them purport to have the whole secret neatly packaged in a formula, but others are of real value to students and are eagerly consulted. Professor Kenneth Rowe, of Michigan, teacher of Arthur Miller, in his "Write that Play," takes a one act drama ("Riders to the Sea"), and a long play ("A Doll's House"), and analyses them line by line, sometimes word by word, to show what is accomplished by visual means, how ideas are "planted" to foreshadow what is to come, how one speech leads to the next, how character is revealed, and so on. This is valuable to the young dramatist. Indeed, such analysis

Le professeur Kensington Rowe, qui fut le maître d'Arthur Miller, étudie, dans son *Write that Play* (Ecrivez cette pièce), un drame en un acte : *La Chevauchée vers la Mer,* de J. M. Synge, et une œuvre de longue haleine : *Maison de Poupée,* d'Ibsen. Il les analyse ligne à ligne, parfois mot à mot, pour montrer à quoi l'on peut parvenir par les moyens visuels, comment une scène en amène une autre, comment se dessine un personnage, et ainsi de suite. Une telle analyse est précieuse pour un jeune auteur et même pour un dramaturge expérimenté. Mes élèves ont un jour demandé à Maxwell Anderson comment il faisait pour se conserver en bonne forme lorsqu'il n'était pas occupé à une pièce. Il répondit : « Je lis les meilleures pièces des meilleurs auteurs. »

A qui voudrait mieux connaître les méthodes de ces cours de théâtre en Amérique je conseillerais la lecture de *The Human Nature of Playwriting* (L'Aspect humain de la composition dramatique), par Samson Raphaelson. Auteur à succès — on lui doit notamment *Accent on Youth* — il revint à son *alma mater,* l'Université de l'Illinois, tout un hiver durant, pour y enseigner la composition dramatique. Il fit noter par un sténographe ce qui se disait dans sa classe et publia presque intégralement ces discussions dans son recueil. Celui-ci donne une juste idée des thèmes qui passionnaient la jeunesse après la guerre, et en même temps on voit comment un professeur peut aider ses élèves à récrire leurs pièces pour les mettre en accord avec les nécessités scéniques ou avec la logique et la vraisemblance. On y peut constater comment les « principes » sont mis en valeur dès que dans son travail un élève se met en contradiction avec eux, et aussi comment l'élève prend, de lui-même, conscience de leur validité.

Le choix d'un sujet est le plus souvent abandonné par le maître à l'élève, selon le principe que c'est seulement ce qui intéresse profondément l'écrivain, ce qu'il connaît à fond qui peut donner naissance à une œuvre valable. Naturellement l'instructeur essaie d'empêcher l'élève de s'engager dans certains sujets que son expérience lui a fait considérer comme inextricables ou manifestement démesurés. Mais la plupart des professeurs estiment qu'il vaut mieux laisser l'élève s'attaquer au sujet qu'il brûle de traiter, même s'il présente les plus grandes difficultés, plutôt que de lui imposer un sujet qui ne provoquerait en lui aucune émotion. Il est tout à l'honneur de cet enseignement universitaire que Broadway ne semble pas compter pour les maîtres et que la jeunesse puisse y chercher ses propres moyens d'expression. On n'a même jamais découragé les jeunes qui veulent faire du théâtre poétique. On se borne à leur faire remarquer qu'il serait plus sage de connaître au moins les rudiments de la composition dramatique avant de compliquer les choses en écrivant une pièce en vers.

Il existe une exception notoire à cette liberté dans le choix du sujet. Voilà quelque trente ans, à l'Université de la Caroline du Nord, le professeur Frederick Koch, dont l'enthousiasme était contagieux, fit écrire par ses élèves des *folk-plays,* pièces populaires en un acte, sur les gens de cette région montagneuse : humbles pêcheurs, pauvres hères blancs ou noirs. L'idée lui en était venue sans doute du succès qu'avaient remporté à Dublin, à l'Abbey Theatre, des pièces de ce genre. Les garçons et les filles de la Caroline du Nord se mirent à l'œuvre avec joie — peut-être cela les reposait-il des mathématiques et de l'histoire — et composèrent une quantité de courtes pièces, qui d'ailleurs se ressemblaient souvent entre elles comme deux pois dans une cosse. N'émergea qu'un seul dramaturge de valeur, Paul Green. Mais il faut se rappeler que ces auteurs n'étaient pas des écrivains doués comme, en Irlande, Synge ou Yeats. C'étaient de très jeunes gens, sans formation théâtrale, et il en était peu parmi eux qui eussent l'ambition de devenir des écrivains de métier. Un résultat indiscutable fut que le théâtre se mit à vivre en Caroline du Nord (Etat

is valuable even to the experienced dramatist. My class once asked Maxwell Anderson what he did to keep in trim when not working on a play of his own. "I read the best plays by the best dramatists," he replied.

If people in other countries are interested in a closer view of American class-room methods they can find it in "The Human Nature of Playwriting," by Samson Raphaelson, a successful dramatist (author of "Accent on Youth," etc.) who went back to his alma mater, the University of Illinois, for a winter and taught playwriting there. He employed a stenographer to take down what was said in the seminars and reproduces much of this discussion in his book. It gives a fair picture of the kind of subjects which appealed to young people in the post-war years as themes for plays, and illustrates how one teacher went about the task of helping the students to re-write their scripts in closer accord with stage necessities, or logic and probability. It will be seen how the "principles" are stressed when the actual work of the student comes into conflict with them, and he can directly apprehend their validity.

The choice of subject is something which most instructors leave pretty much to the student, on the theory that only something which deeply interests the writer and which he knows about, will make a play of any value. The instructor, of course, tries to steer his pupil away from a "dead end" theme, which past experience has proved impractical, or from themes, obviously too big for him to handle. But most teachers believe it is better to let the pupil have a go at something he is burning to write, even if it offers great difficulties, than to take subject in which he is not emotionally involved. It is a glory of the college theatre that Broadway does not have to be considered, and youth can try to have its say. Even poetic dramas are not discouraged, though all teachers point out to the student that it is far wiser to master the rudiments of stage construction before taking on the additional task of writing in verse.

There was a rather famous exception to the general practice of free choice in subject matter. At the University of North Carolina thirty years ago Professor Frederick Koch, a contageously enthusiastic man, set his classes to writing one-act "folk plays," as he called them, by which he meant plays about the picturesque and humble people of the region: mountain people, fisher folk, "poor whites" and negroes. In part this may have been inspired by the success of the early plays at the Abbey Theatre in Dublin. The North Carolina boys and girls fell to with a will—it was something new, and a welcome relief, perhaps, from mathematics and history—and turned out a vast number of short plays, often from their restricted subject matter as alike as two peas in a pod, and put them on the stage as best they could. Only one dramatist of professional stature emerged from this training, Paul Green. But it should be remembered that these authors were not literary artists, like Synge and Yeats in Ireland, but undergraduates with no theatrical background, and few of them with any ambition to become professional playwrights. What was accomplished was a new awareness of living theatre in North Carolina, a state with no professional playhouses, a great increase in dramatic work in the state high schools, and a rush of people to see a play when it was put on. The young people who wrote these plays, however, were infrequently from the "folk" they wrote about, and an increased sophistication in the state has brought about a change in interest to full-length plays of a less parochial and simple pattern. But the creative enthusiasm of the

qui ne comptait aucune scène professionnelle) et que le public vint en foule au spectacle. Les jeunes auteurs étaient étrangers aux milieux qu'ils décrivaient et peu à peu un changement se dessina qui porta l'intérêt vers des pièces plus importantes, d'inspiration moins locale et moins naïve. Mais l'enthousiasme créateur des premiers jours avait formé un public dont l'attachement s'affirma.

La pièce en un acte a toujours servi de base, en Amérique, à l'enseignement de la composition dramatique. Pour commencer, on demande à l'élève d'adapter une courte nouvelle. C'est son premier « devoir ». Personnages et situations sont inventés déjà et il peut se concentrer sur les problèmes de technique dramatique. Beaucoup de débutants — il est intéressant de le noter — sont attirés par les histoires de Saki, qui comportent des énigmes et un dénouement-surprise. Mais la surprise est surtout pour l'élève quand il découvre qu'un dénouement inattendu est peu ou pas du tout efficace au théâtre. L'intérêt, pour le public, naît de l'attente, et son plaisir est complet lorsque cette attente est comblée. Lord Dunsany a dit un jour, lors d'un cours à l'Université de Pensylvanie : « Il ne faut jamais que le spectateur se dise : « Comme c'est inattendu ! », mais : « Evidemment ! » Si le public connaît un secret que sont censés ignorer les personnages de la pièce, il peut paraître qu'un récit de Saki s'en trouve gâté, mais l'expérience apprend à l'étudiant que c'est la seule façon d'en user sur une scène.

Après ce travail d'adaptation, le débutant est en général invité à écrire une ou deux pièces en un acte de son invention, avant de se lancer dans une œuvre de grand format.

Les gens demandent souvent : « Que deviennent tous ces apprentis dramaturges ? On ne voit pas beaucoup de leurs pièces. » Que deviennent tous les élèves des académies et des conservatoires ? Les plus doués... ou les plus têtus ont quelque chance de faire jouer leurs œuvres par des théâtres professionnels. D'autres deviennent scénaristes ou metteurs en scène, soit à Hollywood, soit à la radio ou à la télévision. Enfin l'étude de l'art d'écrire une pièce prépare admirablement, semble-t-il, au métier de metteur en scène de théâtre. L'un de nos principaux metteurs en scène actuels, Elia Kazan, fut un brillant élément de la « classe des auteurs » à Yale. Comme nous l'avons dit plus haut, trois des fondateurs du « Theatre Guild » furent formés aux mêmes disciplines, et l'un d'eux, Thérésa Helburn, continue à faire autorité au Guild et dans le théâtre américain.

La connaissance des problèmes de la composition dramatique peut être considérée comme essentielle pour tout artiste de premier plan, qu'il appartienne à la scène, au cinéma, à la radio ou à la télévision.

★ ★

WALTER PRICHARD EATON

Emeritus Professor of the Drama Department of Yale University. Also a historian of the theatre, dramatic critic, author and essayist.

Professeur émérite du Drama Department de l'Université de Yale. Egalement historien du théâtre, critique dramatique, auteur et essayiste.

earlier days has prepared an audience in North Carolina for more mature student work.

The one-act play has always figured in American instruction in playwriting. The beginning student generally is obliged to adapt a short story as his first assignment. He thus has his characters and situation invented for him, and can concentrate on the problems of stage technique. It is interesting to note how often the beginner is attracted to a story by Saki, with its trick, or surprise ending, and how surprised he himself is to discover that the surprise ending is of little or no value on the stage. Suspense in the theatre comes from expectation, and satisfaction from expectation fulfilled. As Lord Dunsany once told a playwriting class at the University of Penn: "The audience should never say, 'How surprising!' but 'Why, of course!'" To let the audience in on the secret, which is unknown to the stage characters, may seem to spoil a Saki tale, but the student learns by trial that only thus can it be made theatrically effective.

After the adaptation, the beginner is generally required to write one or more original one-act plays before tackling a full-length drama.

People often ask, "What becomes of all these students of playwriting? We don't see many of their plays." What becomes of all the students of painting, of music, of any of the fine arts? The most talented, or the most persistent, eventually see their work on the professional stage. But it is not generally recognized, perhaps, that a training in playwriting is of great aid to first-rate work in the motion pictures, in radio drama, in television. Moreover, the study of playwriting seems to be of great value to stage directors. One of the leading directors in America today, Elia Kazan, was a playwriting major at Yale. As we earlier stated, three of the original directors of the Theatre Guild were also playwriting students, one of whom, Theresa Helburn, is still a guiding spirit in the Guild and a power in the American theatre.

A knowledge of the problems of the playwriting may be considered basic to a first-rate theatre artist, whether in the living or the mechanical theatre.

WALTER PRICHARD EATON

Ribbon Bow, *written at Yale University by student Robert MacLeod, and produced by Professor Frank MacMullan. 1950.*
(Photograph by Anta.)

Ribbon Bow, *écrite à l'Université de Yale par l'étudiant Robert MacLeod, est mise en scène par le professeur Frank MacMullan. 1950.*
(Photo Anta.)

AN AMERICAN REACTION

★

UNE RÉACTION AMÉRICAINE

ARTHUR MILLER

Author of "All my Sons" and "Death of a Salesman."
Auteur de *Tous mes Fils* et de *Mort d'un Commis voyageur.*

ARTHUR MILLER

MR. Eaton has made the most important observation about college playwriting courses: "We do not judge the value of courses in philosophy or physics by the number of professional philosophers and physicists coming out of them, and there is no reason to apply so special a standard to the playwriting course."

As a student I was well aware of this truth, but nevertheless I must confess to a feeling of frustration when day after day I had to sit around a table and listen to the reading of utterly talentless plays written by people who were merely indulging themselves, who had paid tuition, in effect, in order to guarantee themselves a forced audience for works that ought not even to have been written.

And still I think my time spent in that class was worthwhile. Like so many others I had only the most exalted standards, and from my reading of Broadway hits it seemed to me that what I thought of as theatre had no relationship to Broadway's demands. So there was a sense of loneliness which is almost unbearable unless support for one's vision is found somewhere, better still in a quarter deserving of one's respect.

I found that support in Kenneth T. Rowe, Professor of Playwriting at the University of Michigan. The fault I found with him was his boundless toleration—he was capable of running into the ground the slightest ray of hope in the most hopeless of plays.

MR. Eaton, parlant des cours de composition dramatique, a fait une remarque très pertinente : « On ne juge pas, a-t-il dit, de la valeur d'un cours de philosophie ou de physique en se basant sur le nombre de philosophes ou de physiciens professionnels qu'il a formés. Il n'y a pas lieu d'être plus exigeant lorsqu'il s'agit du cours de playwriting. »

Quand j'étais étudiant, j'avais conscience déjà de cette vérité; mais j'avoue cependant avoir été souvent impatient de devoir, chaque jour, m'asseoir à une table pour entendre des pièces tout à fait dépourvues d'intérêt. Ceux qui les avaient composées s'étaient offert une fantaisie. Ils ne s'étaient inscrits au cours que pour s'assurer bon gré, mal gré, un auditoire.

Et pourtant je crois que le temps que j'ai passé dans cette classe n'a pas été perdu. Comme tant d'autres j'avais une conception très pure de l'art dramatique. Je lisais les grands succès de Broadway, mais il me semblait bien que ce que je considérais comme le vrai théâtre n'avait pas le moindre rapport avec ce qu'on y exigeait. De là cette sensation de solitude, qui me serait devenue presque insupportable si je n'avais pas trouvé quelque part, pour me confirmer dans mes idées, l'appui de quelqu'un dont je pouvais respecter l'opinion.

Cet appui, je l'ai découvert en la personne de Kenneth T. Rowe, professeur de playwriting à l'Université de Michigan. Son seul défaut était une indulgence sans bornes. Il parvenait à discerner je ne sais quelles lueurs, quelles promesses, dans les productions les plus désespérantes.

A man is born with a sense of play structure, but this is not all. How is he to know for certain that he has it in him? I wrote my first play after having seen two plays in my life—and those before I was fifteen—and having read a few of Shakespeare's tragedies. I will admit that I decided when to end the acts by asking a theatre-going classmate how long he remembered the usual act to last—and so my acts ended by the clock. And yet, with all my misgivings, and in no less a sweat than I have been in at any of my Broadway first nights, I listened to my play being read and when the class laughed, and one woman wept, and I saw that what I had written had reached out to them and grasped their senses, I felt sure for the first time that this was truly my work in life—I had opened. I had witnessed the most magical phenomenon of all—the fact that my organization of words and scenes had held strangers and that I had turned them this way and that at will.

A small victory, and I had no illusions about it. But for one who has no theatre in his past, who feels barred from the elevated heights of the professional theatre, whose most prevalent feeling is loneliness and the sense of not being wanted or connected to the stage, even such small victories are bread enough to feed the soul through many a succeeding effort.

The class was my first theatre. It was also a corroboration for me. And it was a guide to learning. Through Kenneth Rowe I was able to systematically destroy my utter ignorance of the past. The various forms of drama through the ages were made available to me, and I saved a great deal of fumbling around.

What I "learned" there is difficult to say. Playwriting is after all not a science. One cannot accumulate a series of formulæ until the last one is memorized. Most important of all, as far as learning was concerned, was that the teacher reinforced my hope until it became a conviction that it would not necessarily be in vain for me to dedicate myself to the profession. And this may have helped me to keep at the writing of plays from 1938, when I graduated, until 1945 when my first production came. Of course, a man who is not initially driven to playwriting, for whom it is merely another way of making a living is going to speak differently of the playwriting course. But I think that even for him it has a value in that it may make him more discerning as an audience, and in some cases inspire him to aid the theatre in his community.

A course in playwriting, then, will not "make" playwrights. Nothing will do that. But it serves, nevertheless. In America today the serious writer faces the incredible degradation of standards brought about by the commercialization of the arts; he must be very strong to hold onto his vision, and the little college islands are practically the only centers left where the value of a work is regarded as more important than its success.

It seems to me that the man who is born with the dramatic point of view cannot lose by attending such a school, and just conceivable he may gain a great deal in the formation of his talent, and the strengthening of his will to keep it.

Le sens de la construction dramatique est inné, mais ce n'est pas là tout. Comment savoir si on le possède ou non ? Lorsque j'ai fait ma première pièce, j'en avais vu jouer deux en tout, et je n'avais pas tout à fait quinze ans. J'avais lu, il est vrai, plusieurs tragédies de Shakespeare. Je vais être franc : pour savoir quand le moment était venu de terminer un acte, j'avais demandé à un camarade, qui fréquentait les théâtres, s'il se rappelait combien de temps un acte dure en moyenne ; et c'est sur ma montre que je me suis réglé ! Cependant, rempli de craintes, suant d'angoisse (il en fut de même plus tard pour mes premières à Broadway), j'assistai à la lecture de mon œuvre de début, et quand mes condisciples se mirent tout à coup à rire et puis qu'une étudiante pleura, et que je vis que ce que j'avais écrit touchait les auditeurs et s'emparait d'eux, je compris que c'était vraiment pour faire cela que j'avais été mis au monde. Ce fut un épanouissement. Je voyais se matérialiser le plus prodigieux des phénomènes. Cet arrangement de mots, de scènes que j'avais combiné agissait sur des êtres qui m'étaient étrangers et les influençait dans tel ou tel sens au gré de ma volonté.

Une médiocre victoire, sans doute, et sur laquelle je ne m'illusionnais guère. Mais le théâtre n'avait rien été dans mon passé. Les hauts lieux de la profession dramatique semblaient, pour moi, à jamais inaccessibles. Seul un sentiment de solitude me dominait, l'idée que rien ne me rattachait à la scène ni ne m'y appelait. Dès lors, ces premiers succès, quelque insignifiants qu'ils fussent, suffirent à fortifier mon âme pour toutes les longues épreuves à venir.

La classe fut donc mon premier théâtre. Elle me servit aussi de banc d'épreuve, de guide dans mon apprentissage. Grâce à Kenneth Rowe, je me suis systématiquement dégagé de cette ignorance totale où j'étais de l'histoire de l'art dramatique. Ainsi me furent épargnés bien des tâtonnements.

Ce que j'ai vraiment « appris » est assez difficile à dire. La composition dramatique n'a certes rien d'une science exacte. On ne peut pas accumuler les formules et les absorber une à une. Ce qui comptait surtout dans mon travail d'étude, c'est le soin que prit mon professeur de transformer peu à peu ce qui n'était que des espérances en une conviction. Une telle certitude m'a permis de tenir bon, de continuer à écrire des pièces depuis 1938, année où je quittai l'école, jusqu'à 1945, année où ma première pièce fut représentée. Naturellement, un homme qui ne se sentirait pas invinciblement poussé vers le théâtre, pour qui écrire des pièces serait simplement un moyen comme un autre de gagner de l'argent, aurait une tout autre opinion de ces cours. Mais je suis convaincu que, même à un tel élève, le cours peut être d'une réelle utilité, en lui donnant plus de discernement et aussi une conception plus haute du théâtre.

Dans l'Amérique d'aujourd'hui, l'écrivain véritable doit faire face à une incroyable dégradation des valeurs. C'est la « commercialisation » de tous les arts qui en est la cause. Il faut à un écrivain beaucoup d'énergie pour ne pas trahir son idéal. Ces petits îlots épars que sont les classes de playwriting sont à peu près les seuls endroits où l'on considère encore que la valeur propre d'un ouvrage est bien plus importante que sa réussite matérielle. On n'arrivera certes jamais à y « fabriquer » des auteurs. Mais j'ose affirmer qu'un dramaturge-né ne peut que gagner à se mettre à telle école. Son talent s'y formera, en même temps que s'affermira sa volonté d'en maintenir l'intégrité envers et contre tous.

ARTHUR MILLER

RÉACTIONS FRANÇAISES

PAR ANDRÉ FRANK

critique dramatique au *Populaire*.

THE initiative of American universities in creating their own "Faculties" of dramatic art, with sections of acting, directing and playwriting causes us some surprise. In the world of the Theatre we are inclined to put our faith in what is rightly or wrongly termed genius, and while admitting that genius may be the fruit of prolonged patience, and that it requires experience and even trials to mature it, we, in France, have never contemplated adding to our "Conservatoires" classes for dramatists in bud.

The rules of the theatre never, even in the days of the three unities, assumed the character of law and we congratulate ourselves upon the fact.

Nevertheless the experiment begun at Harvard University forty years ago raises various questions of singularly topical as well as perennial interest. Questions which, like the American experiment, themselves draw forth the most varied reactions.

1. CAN THE CRAFT OF PLAYWRITING BE LEARNED?

NEGATIVE ANSWERS :

Roger Ferdinand: I would say that of all crafts that of the dramatist is the least teachable.

André Roussin: If one knew a way to make good plays one would always use it. If progress could be made in the dramatist's craft old authors would write better plays than young ones which is manifestly not the case. Almost all the masterpieces of the French stage were written by authors under forty ("Le Cid," "Andromaque," "Hernani," "Cyrano," "Topaze"), and have rarelly been equalled by their authors' "experienced" production.

AFFIRMATIVE ANSWERS:

André Obey: I have convinced myself that the dramatists craft consists of a series of recipes. Each time I attend a performance of one of my plays I observe that whenever the audience loses hold it is because I myself have departed from a certain number of fixed rules. These rules have never been codified, although I begged Copeau and Dullin to formulate them. A play is a house to live in, and the art of sound construction can be taught.

Armand Salacrou: Why should one be able to teach the craft of sculpture, the art of painting, of building a palace or a cathedral and not the art dramatic writing? Why should there be schools of Fine Arts, professors of fugue and counterpoint and no professors of the art of the theatre?

All techniques may be taught and learned, and though technique may never produce genius it is always useful.

L'INITIATIVE d'Universités américaines de posséder leurs « Facultés » d'art théâtral, avec des sections d'apprentissage du jeu, de la mise en scène et de l'écriture dramatique, ne manque pas d'étonner. Dans le domaine de la scène, on croit volontiers à ce que l'on nomme, improprement ou non, le génie...

S'il est admis que ce génie peut être le fruit d'une longue patience, qu'il a besoin d'expériences, sinon d'épreuves, jamais en France on n'a songé à adjoindre à nos Conservatoires des classes pour dramaturges en herbe.

Les règles fameuses du théâtre, même au temps des trois unités, n'ont jamais pris l'allure du magistère. Et l'on s'en réjouit...

Pourtant, l'expérience née, voilà quarante ans, à l'Université de Harvard soulève diverses questions singulièrement actuelles, en même temps qu'éternelles.

Questions très différentes qui, nous allons le voir, provoquent, au même titre que l'initiative d'outre-Atlantique, des réactions diverses...

1. LE MÉTIER D'AUTEUR DRAMATIQUE PEUT-IL S'APPRENDRE ?

CEUX QUI RÉPONDENT NON.

Roger Ferdinand : Je dirai que s'il est un métier qui ne peut pas s'apprendre c'est bien celui d'auteur dramatique.

André Roussin : Si l'on connaissait la façon de faire une bonne pièce, on l'appliquerait toujours. Si l'on faisait des progrès dans ce métier, les vieux auteurs écriraient de meilleures pièces que les jeunes, or il est évident que ce n'est pas le cas. Et presque tous les chefs-d'œuvre du théâtre français ont été écrits avant quarante ans *(Le Cid, Andromaque, Hernani, Cyrano, Topaze)* et rarement égalés par la production de l'auteur « expérimenté ».

CEUX QUI RÉPONDENT OUI.

André Obey : Je suis persuadé que le métier d'auteur dramatique consiste en une série de recettes. Chaque fois que j'assiste à la représentation d'une de mes pièces, je m'aperçois que si le public un instant se détache, c'est que je me suis séparé moi-même d'un certain nombre de règles fixes. Elles n'ont d'ailleurs jamais été codifiées. J'avais supplié Copeau et Dullin de le faire...

Une pièce de théâtre, c'est une maison à habiter... Et l'on enseigne à bien construire.

Le métier s'apprend-il ? Je réponds : oui.

Armand Salacrou : Pourquoi « enseignerait-on » le métier de sculpteur, l'art de peindre, la façon de construire une maison, un palais, une cathédrale, et pourquoi serait-il impossible d'« enseigner » le métier d'auteur dramatique ? Pourquoi y aurait-il des écoles des Beaux-Arts, des professeurs de contrepoint et de fugue, et pourquoi serait-il impossible d'apprendre l'art du théâtre ?

Toutes les techniques s'enseignent et s'apprennent. Et si la technique ne donne jamais le génie, elle le sert toujours.

2. WHAT IS YOUR OPINION OF AMERICAN METHODS AND PLAYWRITING COURSES?

THOSE IN FAVOUR:

André Obey: I have no knowledge of Professor Baker and am in no position to judge of his teaching, but I can very well imagine Copeau, or Dullin, or Jouvet in this capacity.

André Obey (à droite) avec le metteur en scène Claude Sainval. André Obey — *Principales œuvres :* Noé, Le Viol de Lucrèce, L'Homme de cendres, Maria.

Armand Salacrou: The question we are invited to answer amounts to this: "Can an official organization teach dramatic art?" Why not ? In any case the question no longer concerns dramatic art, but the good and evil of official teaching. After my last visit to New York and my discovery of the Broadway theatre I voiced my concern for a theatre dependant on such heavy financial backing, and explained how I recovered confidence in the future of American drama upon visiting the theatre classes of the American Universities. I expressed myself as follows: "I am prepared to bet that in twenty years the dramatists who reign on Broadway will be those now learning their craft in the University theatres. I shall not be there to see it, but I am convinced that the bet is a safe one."

THOSE IN DOUBT:

André Roussin: Playwriting courses may favour the blossoming of authors who manufacture plays of a stereotyped or mass produced nature. I think that an original author discovers his own craft, which is more a question of instinct than of rules. Sartre is a case in point. One of his first plays, "Huis-clos" (No Exit), was a masterpiece written in defiance of all traditional principles of construction.

Jean Paul Sartre: If anyone told me that such an experiment was to be made in France I should consider the enterprise extraordinarily pretentious. All teaching offers what is commonly done, or what has already been done, never what is going to be done. The young author would inevitably be subjected to the influence of his elders.

2. QUE PENSEZ-VOUS DE LA MÉTHODE AMÉRICAINE ET DES COURS DE PLAYWRITING ?

CEUX QUI APPROUVENT.

André Obey : J'ignore, bien entendu, qui fut M. Baker et il m'est impossible de juger son enseignement. Mais j'imagine très bien un Copeau, un Dullin ou un Jouvet dans son rôle.

Armand Salacrou : La question qui nous est posée se ramène donc à celle-ci : un organisme officiel peut-il enseigner l'art dramatique. Pourquoi pas ? En tous cas, le problème ne touche plus à l'art dramatique, il touche aux bienfaits et aux méfaits de l'enseignement officiel.

A la suite de mon dernier voyage à New-York et de ma découverte du théâtre à Broadway, j'ai dit mon inquiétude devant un art dépendant de conditions économiques si lourdes et comment j'ai repris espoir dans l'avenir du théâtre américain lorsque j'ai visité les cours dramatiques des Universités américaines. Et je me suis ainsi exprimé : « Je suis prêt à le parier. Dans vingt ans, les dramaturges qui régneront sur Broadway auront appris leur métier dans les théâtres universitaires. Je ne serai pas là pour le voir, mais je sais que je gagnerai mon pari. »

CEUX QUI DOUTENT.

André Roussin : Les cours peuvent favoriser l'éclosion d'auteurs fabriquant des pièces types, genre « série ». Je

Roger Ferdinand (à droite) et ses interprètes de La Galette des Rois.

Roger Ferdinand — *Président de la Société des Auteurs et Compositeurs dramatiques français. Principales œuvres :* Le Président Hautecœur, Chotard et Cie, Les J 3.

pense qu'un auteur original trouve lui-même son métier, qui est plus une question d'instinct que de règles. Exemple : Sartre, qui pour l'une de ses premières pièces écrit un chef-d'œuvre, *Huis-Clos*, contraire à toutes les règles de construction traditionnelles.

Jean-Paul Sartre : Si quelqu'un me disait qu'en France on va prendre une telle initiative, je trouverais cette entreprise d'une extraordinaire prétention. Un enseignement offre toujours ce qui se fait ou s'est fait, jamais ce qui va se faire. Le jeune auteur dramatique subirait obligatoirement l'influence de ses devanciers.

And who is qualified to undertake such teaching? Is the author of established reputation to have this impertinence? or should it be the producer? The producer can obviously offer the lessons of his experience. Charles Dullin even contemplated doing so, but it can only be a matter of personal and divergent experiences. In short the method in question seems to me another aspect of a way of thought

Jean-Paul Sartre — *Principales œuvres :* Les Mouches, Huis-Clos, Les Mains sales, Le Diable et le bon Dieu.

and behaviour I meet in other fields. Time must at all costs be suppressed. I do not believe in this at all. By trying to dispense with life, art becomes sclerotic and execrable drama is produced. One might perhaps teach the way to write operettas, or even draw lessons from dramatic art at times when it is not renewing itself. Voltaire in the XVIIIth century would have been in a position to learn the construction of tragedies, but it would not have led anywhere. In periods of research and discovery nothing replaces life.

3. CAN A YOUNG AUTHOR ACQUIRE THE RUDIMENTS OF HIS ART SIMPLY THROUGH CONTACT WITH THE PUBLIC?

Roger Ferdinand: Certainly, and that is even the whole problem nowadays of producing first plays. Lugné Poe or Antoine would produce a play, even an imperfect one, if it showed promise, and we all know how right the former was over the gifts of Salacrou—but would he have had the means to follow the same policy to-day? Yet in a sense dramatic art owes more to mistakes than to successes.

Armand Salacrou: I have always considered that great periods of the theatre were born of a conjunction between great authors and great audiences. Just as there are unsuccessful authors I discern in the history of drama certain unsuccessful audiences.

It therefore seems indispensable to assist young dramatists in gathering their public together.

Jean Paul Sartre: I do honestly think so. What a great experience it is to see and hear oneself performed!

Et qui pourrait se charger d'un tel cours ? Est-ce l'auteur arrivé qui aurait le toupet de s'arroger un tel droit ? Est-ce plutôt le metteur en scène ?

Le metteur en scène peut évidemment donner les leçons de son expérience. Charles Dullin y avait même songé, mais il ne peut jamais s'agir que d'expériences personnelles et diverses.

En somme, la méthode à laquelle on fait ici allusion me paraît un aspect d'une manière de penser et d'agir que je retrouve en bien d'autres domaines. On veut à toute force supprimer le temps. Je n'y crois pas du tout. A vouloir se passer de la vie l'art se sclérose et l'on fait du très mauvais théâtre.

On pourrait peut-être enseigner comment faire une opérette ou même tirer les leçons de l'art dramatique en des temps où il ne se renouvelle plus. Un Voltaire au XVIIIe siècle aurait été à même d'apprendre à bâtir des tragédies, mais ce n'aurait pas conduit plus loin.

Aux époques de recherches et de découvertes, rien ne peut remplacer la vie.

3. AU SEUL CONTACT DU PUBLIC UN JEUNE AUTEUR PEUT-IL ACQUÉRIR LES RUDIMENTS DU MÉTIER ?

Roger Ferdinand : Certainement. Et c'est même toute la question aujourd'hui de la création des premières pièces. Un Lugné-Poe, un Antoine montaient une pièce, même imparfaite,

André Roussin — *Principales œuvres :* La Petite Hutte *(plus de mille représentations)*, Les Œufs de l'autruche, Nina, Bobosse *et tout récemment* Lorsque l'Enfant paraît.

si elle annonçait des promesses d'avenir. Et l'on sait combien un Lugné-Poe ne s'est pas trompé en décelant les dons d'Armand Salacrou... En auraient-ils aujourd'hui les moyens ? Or l'art dramatique en un sens doit plus aux fours qu'aux succès.

Armand Salacrou : J'ai toujours pensé que les grandes époques théâtrales naissaient de la rencontre de grands publics et de grands auteurs. Et de même qu'il y a des auteurs ratés, je vois aussi dans l'histoire du théâtre des publics ratés.

Il est donc pour moi indispensable d'aider le jeune auteur dramatique à rassembler son public.

At the first performances of "Les Mouches," when the theatre was still new to me, I often sat at the back of the audience. I felt the public gripped by the play or detached from it, returning to it and straying again.

4. CAN ONE JUDGE OF AN AUTHOR'S MERITS BY HIS FIRST PLAY?

Roger Ferdinand: Assuredly, but allowing for the fact that a first play is often a failure. It is rare however that some scene in it does not disclose incipient talent. And some dramatists are gifted from the start, like the authors of "Le Don d'Adèle" and "Ami-Ami."

André Roussin: A first play seems to me to contain all those which the author writes subsequently.

5. HOW DID YOU ACHIEVE SUCCESS?

Roger Ferdinand: For my part I was a teacher in the provinces, and had neither moral nor financial support. The desire to write plays seized hold of me with particular force on seeing Jacques Natanson's "L'Enfant truqué" (The Fake Child). I drew encouragement to write a second play from a letter of Charles Dullin, which reached me during the school holidays. I was thrilled at his writing to me, and later he produced "Irma" at the Atelier.

André Obey: I had written a story which had been published by Colette. Denys Amiel remarked that a play could be made of it, and I invited him to try. Eventually we wrote it together and it became the realistic play entitled "La Souriante Madame Beudet" (Smiling Madame Beudet). As I watched the rehearsals I thought "the stage is really a tremendous thing." Three years later I was introduced to Copeau who told me to come and see him. One night I went round to the Vieux Colombier. We walked onto the stage and at the sound of his voice it became crowded with figures and imagery. "One has to understand this" he said "it has volume." He continued to wake dramatic creations till at last I said "I think I understand" and he replied "You must not write a play for ten years." Later he entrusted to me the Compagnie des Quinze and I wrote for them "Noé" (Noah) and "Le Viol de Lucrèce" (The Rape of Lucretia).

André Roussin: I wrote my first comedy while acting for the Rideau Gris. Rejected by nine different Paris directors, actors and producers "Am Stram Gram" saw the light in 1941 because I decided to produce and act it myself. Its success in unoccupied France persuaded a Paris theatre manager to give it in the metropolis in 1944, ten years after it had been written.

Armand Salacrou: My beginnings were not difficult for between 1920 and 1930 I met two men who helped me, and my young fellow dramatists, but who are no longer living: Lugné-Poe and Charles Dullin. I was also helped by an unofficial group which prefigured the organization now known as "L'Aide à la Première Pièce."

Jean Paul Sartre: I had no difficulty in getting my first play produced because I knew Charles Dullin.

6. DO THE PRESENT SOLUTIONS OF ASSISTANCE FOR FIRST PLAYS, COMPETITIONS AND SO FORTH SEEM TO YOU ADEQUATE AND SUFFICIENT?

Ferdinand, Roussin and Sartre unanimously approve "Assistance for First Plays."

Jean-Paul Sartre : Sincèrement, je le crois. Entendre et voir ses propres spectacles, quelle expérience ! Aux premières représentations des *Mouches*, quand le théâtre était encore pour moi une chose nouvelle, je me plaçais souvent au fond de la salle. Je sentais le public pris par la pièce ou devenir étranger, revenir à elle et s'éloigner encore.

4. PEUT-ON DÉCELER LES MÉRITES D'UN AUTEUR SUR SA PREMIÈRE PIÈCE

Roger Ferdinand : Assurément. A cette réserve près qu'une première pièce se montre souvent ratée. Mais il est rare qu'une scène ne permette pas de deviner le talent naissant. Et il y a des auteurs dès le début vraiment doués ; ceux du *Don d'Adèle* et d'*Ami-Ami* me paraissent à ce point de vue des exemples typiques.

André Roussin : Une première pièce me paraît contenir toutes celles qu'un auteur écrira.

5. COMMENT AVEZ-VOUS RÉUSSI A VOUS IMPOSER ?

Roger Ferdinand : Pour ma part, j'étais professeur en province ; je n'avais nul appui financier ni moral. Le désir d'écrire des pièces m'est venu plus spécialement après avoir entendu *L'Enfant truqué*, de Jacques Natanson. Les encouragements pour écrire une seconde pièce, je les ai trouvés dans une lettre de Charles Dullin que je reçus pendant les vacances scolaires. Je trouvais merveilleux que Dullin m'écrivît. Par la suite, il m'a monté *Irma* à l'Atelier.

André Obey : : J'avais écrit une nouvelle que Colette avait publiée. Denys Amiel m'a dit : « Il y a une pièce là-dedans. » Je lui ai répondu : « Faites-la ! » Nous l'avons écrite en collaboration et ce fut : *La Souriante Madame Beudet*, une pièce réaliste. Quand j'ai assisté aux répétitions, j'ai pensé aussitôt : « La scène, c'est une chose du tonnerre. » Trois ans après, je fus présenté à Copeau. Il me dit : « Venez me voir. » Un soir, j'allai au Vieux-Colombier. Nous descendîmes sur la scène, et à sa voix le plateau se peuplait d'images et de figures. « Il faut comprendre ça, dit-il. Ça a un volume. » Il continuait à évoquer la création dramatique et je lui dis enfin : « Je crois que j'ai compris ! » Alors il me répondit :

— Pendant dix ans il ne faut pas écrire de pièce.

Plus tard il m'a confié la Compagnie des Quinze et j'ai écrit pour elle *Noé*, *Le Viol de Lucrèce*...

André Roussin : J'ai écrit ma première comédie alors que je jouais comme acteur au Rideau Gris. Refusée à Paris par neuf directeurs, acteurs ou metteurs en scène, *Am-Stram-Gram* vit le jour en 1941, parce que j'avais décidé de la monter et de la jouer moi-même. Le succès qu'elle remporta en zone libre décida un directeur parisien à la remonter à Paris en 1944, dix ans après que la pièce eut été écrite.

Armand Salacrou : Mes débuts ne furent pas difficiles, car j'ai rencontré à Paris, de 1920 à 1930, pour m'aider des hommes qui aidaient aussi mes jeunes confrères et qui ne sont plus : Lugné-Poe et Charles Dullin.

J'avais aussi été aidé par un groupement officieux de jeunes auteurs, préfiguration de l'aide à la première pièce.

Jean-Paul Sartre : Faire jouer ma première pièce ne m'a pas été difficile parce que je connaissais Dullin.

6. LES SOLUTIONS ACTUELLES : AIDE A LA PREMIÈRE PIÈCE, CONCOURS, ETC. VOUS PARAISSENT-ELLES ADÉQUATES ET SUFFISANTES ?

Unanimement, Ferdinand, Roussin et Sartre approuven l'Aide à la première pièce.

Armand Salacrou et Charles Dullin.
Armand Salacrou — *Principales œuvres* : L'Inconnue d'Arras, La Terre est ronde, Les Nuits de la colère, L'Archipel Lenoir.

André Obey: I am convinced that the present solutions are good, provided a certain facility of access exists. The chief thing, as has been said, is "to make a mess of a lot of things," to set up an "Atelier" as Dullin wished to do. It is no longer possible to experiment in the theatre because one risks one's life and one's fortune every time; which is a very serious business.

Armand Salacrou: I should like to see a theatre in the Cité Universitaire for example, filled with the unforgettable enthusiasm I witnessed at Yale University where, in a hall equipped by student-engineers, plays by student-authors were played by student-actors before a marvellous and critical audience, whom I would like to call student-playgoers.

7. DO YOU CONSIDER THAT INDIRECT REMEDIES SHOULD BE SOUGHT? SUCH AS THE AUTHOR-ACTOR, AUTHOR-NOVELIST, OR AUTHOR ATTACHED TO A PARTICULAR COMPANY?

Roger Ferdinand: I do not think that an author should tie himself to any one company. Is not the vital thing for him to write in a personal vein and never to become shackled?

André Obey: To write for a single company? Yes, but would such a company as the Compagnie des Quinze, founded in such a spirit of common and disinterested effort that no director or producer was ever named, be workable to-day?

André Roussin: The advantage of the actor-author is that through acting he develops a physical sense of the theatre, for the movement of a play cannot otherwise be felt. Montherlant, Mauriac and Giraudoux have shown that it is possible to be both novelist and playwright. Balzac and Stendhal, on the other hand, did not do so well.

Nothing can equal writing for a particular company. Knowing who is to play the characters one creates is to have their physical image already in mind; given an accent or the quality of a voice they are half alive already. The best parts are written for people with whom one is already acquainted.

André Obey : Je suis persuadé que les solutions actuelles sont bonnes, si elles sont complétées par une sorte de facilité d'accès. L'essentiel consiste, on l'a dit, à « gâcher beaucoup de choses », à créer un atelier, comme le voulait Dullin. Il n'est plus possible aujourd'hui de faire des expériences au théâtre parce qu'on y joue sa vie et sa fortune chaque fois, et c'est très grave.

Armand Salacrou : Je voudrais autour d'un théâtre, à la Cité Universitaire de Paris, par exemple, retrouver cet inoubliable enthousiasme de l'Université de Yale, où, dans une salle équipée par les étudiants ingénieurs, des étudiants acteurs jouaient des pièces d'étudiants auteurs devant le difficile et merveilleux public d'étudiants... pourquoi ne pas lâcher le mot... d'étudiants spectateurs.

7. LES REMÈDES A LA SITUATION CRITIQUE DES JEUNES VOUS PARAISSENT-ILS DEVOIR ÊTRE RECHERCHÉS PAR DES VOIES INDIRECTES ? L'AUTEUR-ACTEUR, L'AUTEUR-ROMANCIER, L'AUTEUR ATTACHÉ A UNE COMPAGNIE, ETC.. ?

Roger Ferdinand : Je ne crois pas qu'un auteur doive s'attacher à une troupe. L'essentiel pour lui ne consiste-t-il pas à écrire sur un ton personnel et à ne jamais devenir un esclave... ?

André Obey : Écrire pour une troupe ? Oui. Mais la Compagnie des Quinze, cette compagnie que nous avions fondée dans un tel esprit d'effort commun et de désintéressement qu'elle ne comportait ni nom de directeur ni de metteur en scène, serait-elle toujours viable ?

André Roussin : L'avantage de l'auteur-acteur est qu'en jouant il prend un sens physique du théâtre et que le mouvement d'une pièce ne se ressent pas autrement.

Montherlant, Mauriac, Giraudoux ont prouvé que l'on peut être romancier et dramaturge ; Balzac et Stendhal n'avaient pas fourni cette preuve, du moins brillamment.

Rien ne peut être meilleur qu'écrire pour une troupe. Connaître ceux qui incarneront les personnages que l'on a à faire vivre, c'est avoir d'eux déjà une image physique, un timbre de voix, un accent, c'est les avoir déjà presque vivants. Les meilleurs rôles sont écrits pour des gens que l'on connaît.

ANDRÉ FRANK

ENGLISH REACTIONS

BY ALAN DENT

MY own view is that one can no more learn how to write a play by dint of attending college-classes on the subject than one can learn how to write a sonnet or an epic poem. But then, I am a dramatic critic, and one who has never tried to write a play, and my viewpoint is not therefore that of experience. To obtain better worthwhile opinions and answers I have recently submitted a little questionnaire to four playwrights of my acquaintance. They are, in order of experience, J. B. Priestley, Terence Rattigan, Cyristopher Fry and Roger MacDougall (the clever young author of "Macadam and Eve" and "To Dorothy, a Son.")

1. CAN PLAYWRITING BE TAUGHT?

PRIESTLEY. — No, but the young aspirant can learn a good deal from the experienced playwright, critic, professor. He can at least be taught to avoid certain elementary mistakes that often prevent certain aspirants from having their work considered

RATTIGAN. — They teach batting at Lords and no doubt produce many competent schoolboy batsmen: how many Dennis Comptons do they discover?

FRY. — Yes: but I don't think it can be learned, unless the pupil is a playwright by nature.

MACDOUGALL. — I don't think so. The danger lies in the academic trick of separating the technique from the subject matter. A man can spend six months balanced precariously on a stool perfecting the technique of the "crawl." Throw him into a pool and he'll sink like a stone. He has learned the technique but he hasn't learned to swim. So with playwriting. Becoming a dramatist is finding out how to speak for yourself in the way that best expresses what you want to say, and I fail to see how it can be taught academically.

2. WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THE AMERICAN IDEA WHEREBY PLAYWRITING IS THE SUBJECT OF A UNIVERSITY COURSE, WITH DEGREES IN PROFICIENCY, ETC?

PRIESTLEY. — A general study of the Drama could be the subject of a University course—its history, æsthetic, technical aspects, etc. But the course of playwriting should only be a part of this.

RATTIGAN. — Certain elementary rules of construction and stagecraft have to be learned (and possibly later discarded!) by all playwrights. I think this could well be covered in a single lecture.

MA propre conviction est qu'on ne peut pas plus apprendre à écrire une pièce de théâtre en suivant des cours qu'on ne peut apprendre à composer un sonnet ou un poème épique. Il est vrai que je ne suis qu'un critique dramatique et que je n'ai jamais essayé de faire une pièce. Mon point de vue n'est pas le fait de l'expérience. Pour avoir de meilleurs avis sur la question, je viens de soumettre le questionnaire proposé à quatre dramaturges de mes amis. Ce sont, par ordre d'expérience, J. B. Priestley, Terence Rattigan, Christopher Fry et Roger Mac Dougall (le jeune et habile auteur de *Macadam and Eve* et de *To Dorothy, a Son.*)

1. PEUT-ON APPRENDRE A ÉCRIRE UNE PIÈCE ?

Priestley : Un dramaturge expérimenté, un critique, un professeur peuvent enseigner pas mal de choses à un jeune élève. Ils peuvent notamment lui permettre d'éviter des fautes élémentaires, qui empêchent souvent qu'on accorde la moindre attention à l'œuvre d'un débutant.

Rattigan : On apprend à manier la crosse chez Lords et il est hors de doute que bien des écoliers deviennent d'excellents « batsmen ». Combien de Dennis Comptons découvre-t-on ?

Fry : Oui, mais, à mon avis, on ne pourra enseigner quelque chose de valable à un étudiant que s'il est auteur dramatique né.

Mac Dougall : Je n'en crois rien. Le danger gît dans la méthode académique, qui sépare la technique de ce qui fait le fond et le sujet d'une pièce. Quelqu'un peut passer six mois à se maintenir plus ou moins en équilibre sur un tabouret pour perfectionner le « crawl », mais jetez-le dans un étang, il coulera comme une pierre. On lui a enseigné la technique, mais il n'a pas appris à nager. Il en est de même d'un auteur dramatique. Devenir un auteur, c'est découvrir comment, en parlant pour soi, on exprime le mieux ce que l'on veut *soi-même* dire. Je ne crois pas que l'on puisse enseigner cela « académiquement ».

2. QUE PENSEZ-VOUS DE LA MÉTHODE AMÉRICAINE ET DES COURS DE PLAYWRITING ?

Priestley : Une étude générale de la littérature dramatique peut faire l'objet d'un cours universitaire : l'histoire, l'esthétique, les aspects techniques du théâtre, etc. Mais un cours de composition dramatique ne pourrait être qu'une partie de cet ensemble.

Rattigan : Il est certaines règles élémentaires de construction et de technique dramatiques que tous les auteurs doivent apprendre (peut-être pour les répudier ensuite). Mais je pense que toute cette matière pourrait être épuisée en une seule leçon.

FRY. — No harm: except that no one should go into a theatre in an academic state of mind. Perhaps a course in circus management would be better?

MACDOUGALL. — One of the present-day dramatist's besetting dangers is that he lives in an age in which the analytical mind is more encouraged and stimulated than the artistic. A course in drama "may" give the student knowledge and experience which may help him to become a dramatist. More probably it will develop in him an attitude of mind which will make this impossible. Drama, as Allardyce Nicoll says, is in its essence a form of poetry. I've never heard even a University Don claim that he can teach a man to be a poet. Nor can I see the analytical approach producing great poetry.

3. DO YOU THINK THAT THE ONLY WAY AN AUTHOR CAN JUDGE THE MERIT OF HIS WORK IS TO SEE IT PERFORMED IN PUBLIC?

PRIESTLEY. — I always advise young writers to get their pieces performed by repertory or amateur companies because by seeing and hearing their work in front of an audience they will realize where its weaknesses are. The weaknesses of a tyro are particularly of this kind: long, pompous speeches, impossible entrances and exits, etc.

RATTIGAN. — Too wide a subject to discuss in short space. On the whole I would say "Yes."

FRY. — Not the only way, though the final test. The answer to Question 5 comes in here.

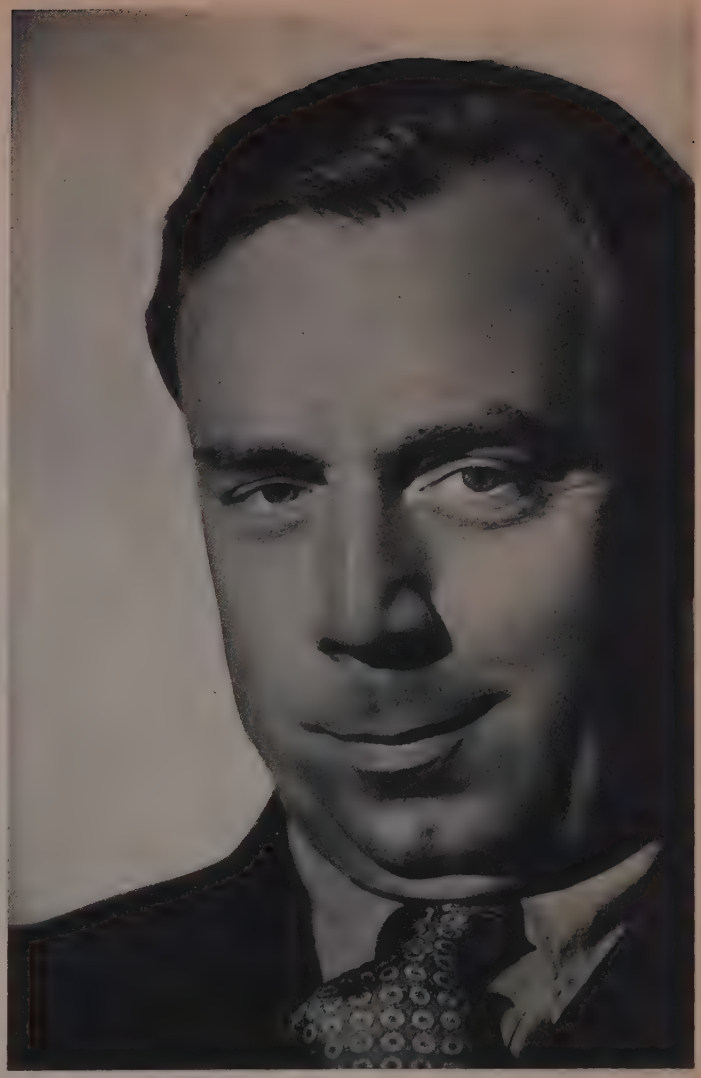
MACDOUGALL. — No. Public reaction to a play may contain surprises, but the most surprising thing is that it should contain so few. The actual writing of a play is its first production, and possibly the best. At this production the author is not only actor and producer, he is also spectator. He writes to please himself in this last rôle, and can surely judge of his success.

4. TAKING INTO ACCOUNT THE DIFFICULTIES FACING A YOUNG WOULD-BE PLAYWRIGHT AT PRESENT, CAN YOU THINK OF ANY WAYS IN WHICH THE START OF HIS CAREER COULD—OR SHOULD—BE MADE EASIER?

PRIESTLEY. — Yes. His work should be read promptly and criticised adequately. This if necessary could be done by a subsidized Play Reading Bureau. Again, new work should be tried out more. London managements could afford a small subsidy to provincial repertories to try out plays for them. And seminars could be held—see answer to Question 1.

RATTIGAN. — More coterie theatres devoted to the presentation of new plays rather than to indifferently performed revivals of the classics. Still, in this respect, the British Theatre is better placed than the American.

FRY. — Making things easier is never any good to anybody. (Is that a sweeping statement?) Playwrights generally mature late: or at least their work does. Patience and a minimum of despair, and eventually a good play, is the only certain method.



J. B. Priestley — *Principal works :* Dangerous Corner, Time and the Conways, They came to a City, An Inspector Calls.

Fry : Pas grand mal à cela. Mais il ne faudrait pas qu'on entre au théâtre tout pénétré de l'esprit académique. Sans doute serait-il préférable de donner un cours sur l'art de diriger un cirque.

Mac Dougall : Un des dangers qui menacent le plus le dramaturge d'aujourd'hui est le fait qu'il vit à une époque où l'on encourage, où l'on stimule plus l'esprit analytique que l'esprit artistique. Un cours sur le théâtre peut donner à l'élève des connaissances, une certaine expérience. Cela peut certes l'aider à devenir un auteur dramatique, mais il y a plus de chance que cela développe en lui un tour d'esprit qui contrecarre sa vocation. « Le théâtre — Allardyce Nicoll l'a dit — est, dans son essence même, une forme de la poésie. » Je ne sache pas qu'un professeur d'Université se soit jamais vanté d'avoir appris à un élève à devenir poète. Et je ne crois pas que les méthodes analytiques puissent faire s'épanouir la grande poésie.

3. LA SEULE CHANCE POUR UN AUTEUR DE JUGER DU MÉRITE DE SON ŒUVRE N'EST-ELLE PAS DE LA VOIR REPRÉSENTER ?

Priestley : J'ai toujours conseillé aux jeunes écrivains de faire représenter leurs pièces par des théâtres de répertoire ou des

Christopher Fry — *Principal works :* A Phœnix too Frequent, The Lady's not for Burning, Venus Observed, A Sleep of Prisoners.

MACDOUGALL. — That it should be made easier is highly desirable. "How" is a knotty problem. I set no store by councils or ministries or state grants. The public must pay—and pay at the box-office. Could not repertory and "try-out" theatres get together so that a new play which finds a public there, but fails to find a commercial sponsor, might have a life of months instead of days?

5. DO YOU THINK IT AN ADVANTAGE FOR A PLAYWRIGHT TO HAVE FIRST-HAND EXPERIENCE IN THE THEATRE, EITHER BY WRITING PLAYS FOR A PARTICULAR COMPANY, OR BY WORKING AS ACTOR, DIRECTOR, STAGE-HAND, ETC?

PRIESTLEY. — Yes, so long as he does not become too theatrical—i. e. too much dominated by immediate theatrical concerns and personalities. I never had this particular advantage myself, and technically never seemed to need it: but, on the whole, I think some such experience is valuable, especially as so many would-be playwrights just do not understand the technical side of the Theatre at all.

RATTIGAN. — Most emphatically, yes.

FRY. — Yes, yes, yes, yes. I think, best of all, an actor, a fairly good actor, but not as good as his imagi-

compagnies d'amateurs. En voyant jouer leur ouvrage face au public, en l'écoutant, ils en apercevront eux-mêmes les faiblesses. Les défauts d'un débutant sont, le plus souvent, de longues tirades solennelles, des entrées et des sorties impossibles, etc.

Rattigan : C'est un sujet trop vaste pour être discuté en quelques mots. En gros, je répondrai : oui.

Fry : Ce n'est pas la seule chance. C'est l'épreuve finale. Ma réponse à la question n° 5 contient une réponse à cette question-ci.

Mac Dougall : Non. Les réactions du public peuvent offrir certaines surprises, mais le plus étonnant, c'est qu'elles en offrent si peu. Ecrire une pièce, c'est déjà la mettre en scène, et peut-être comme elle ne le sera jamais. Dans cette réalisation, l'auteur est non seulement acteur et metteur en scène, mais aussi spectateur. Il écrit pour se plaire à lui-même dans son rôle de spectateur. Il peut sûrement juger s'il a réussi ou non.

4. COMMENT FACILITER LES DÉBUTS D'UN JEUNE AUTEUR?

Priestley : Une première œuvre devrait être lue sans délai et être l'objet d'une critique judicieuse. Au besoin par un comité de lecteurs subventionné. De plus, les ouvrages nouveaux devraient être « essayés » plus souvent. Les directeurs londoniens pourraient accorder de petites subventions aux théâtres de répertoire provinciaux qui donneraient des représentations à titre d'essai. On pourrait aussi organiser des séminaires. Voyez ce que je réponds à la première question.

Rattigan : De petits théâtres à public limité pourraient se consacrer à des pièces nouvelles plutôt qu'à des reprises médiocres d'œuvres classiques. Ajoutons que, pour ce travail, le théâtre britannique est mieux placé que le théâtre américain.

Fry : Rendre les choses plus faciles n'a jamais fait de bien à personne (est-ce la peine de le faire remarquer ?). Les dramaturges, en général, mûrissent tard. Ou du moins c'est le cas de leurs œuvres. De la patience, une petite dose de désespoir et, si possible, une bonne pièce, c'est la méthode la plus sûre.

Mac Dougall : Que l'on facilite les choses me semble hautement désirable. Mais de quelle manière ? Le problème est complexe. Je ne crois ni aux comités, ni aux ministères, ni aux subventions de l'Etat. Le public doit payer, et payer au bureau de location. Les théâtres de répertoire et les scènes d'essai devraient s'entendre pour qu'une pièce qui y trouve un public, mais ne réussit pas à s'assurer un répondant commercial, puisse vivre quelques mois au lieu de quelques jours.

5. Y A-T-IL AVANTAGE POUR UN AUTEUR, A ÉCRIRE POUR UNE COMPAGNIE BIEN DÉTERMINÉE OU A TRAVAILLER COMME ACTEUR, METTEUR EN SCÈNE, TECHNICIEN, ETC. ?

Priestley : Oui, à la condition qu'il ne devienne pas trop « théâtral », c'est-à-dire dominé par des exigences, par des personnalités d'ordre théâtral. Je n'ai jamais joui d'un pareil privilège. Techniquement, je ne crois pas que j'en aie jamais eu besoin. Mais, dans l'ensemble, je pense bien qu'une telle expérience peut avoir sa valeur. De nos jours, il est tant de débutants qui n'entendent rien au côté technique du théâtre.

Rattigan : Je l'affirme avec la dernière énergie.

Fry : Oui, oui, oui, oui. Surtout un acteur, un assez bon acteur, pas tout à fait aussi bon que son imagination pouvait le concevoir. Une expérience réelle et variée du théâtre et du public donneront

nation could warrant. Real and varied experience of the theatre and audiences will give a playwright a pretty shrewd idea of whether his play is likely to work or not (Question 3), so that only minor adjustments will have to be made in rehearsal.

MACDOUGALL. — I think it's fair comment to say that actors tend to write "actors' plays" and producters to write "producers' plays." No doubt time and experience may teach both to write "dramatists' plays." But I don't think they start with any particular advantage. To have experience with a company as a writer, on the other hand, would be, I imagine, a most useful apprenticeship.

à un auteur une lucidité assez pénétrante pour juger si sa pièce peut « porter » ou non, une fois représentée (question n° 3). Ainsi seuls des changements insignifiants devront être faits au cours des répétitions.

Mac Dougall : Je crois qu'il n'est pas exagéré de dire que les acteurs ont tendance à écrire ce qu'on appelle des pièces d'acteur, et les metteurs en scène des pièces de metteur en scène. Nul doute que le temps et l'expérience n'apprennent aux uns et aux autres à écrire des pièces « d'auteur dramatique ». Mais je ne crois pas qu'au départ ils aient un avantage réel. D'autre part, acquérir de l'expérience en travaillant pour une compagnie bien déterminée me paraît devoir être un excellent apprentissage.

ALAN DENT

Dramatic critic of London "News Chronicle."

Terence Rattigan — *Principal works :* French without Tears, The Browning Version, The Winslow Boy.

★

RÉACTIONS ALLEMANDES

★

GERMAN REACTIONS

INGVELDE MULLER

LIKE young writers in France or America, young Germans are naturally at grips with technical problems. From an enquiry I have held among them it emerges, however, that the first obstacle they have to overcome is psychological.

The tragedy of the loyal combatant who discovers his ideal to have been a cheat, and who calls war to account, has engendered an avalanche of plays on themes of war and of the soldier's return, only one of which was successful: "Draussen vor der Tür" (Before the Closed Door) written by Wolfgang Borchert at the age of twenty six.

Since the really young cling to subjects of the too immediate past one is tempted to call young, authors between forty and fifty, whose careers were for the most part interrupted in 1933, and who are now making a new start with some success.

COMME le jeune auteur américain ou français, le jeune auteur allemand se trouve évidemment aux prises avec des problèmes techniques. Cependant, de l'enquête que j'ai menée auprès des jeunes auteurs, il résulte que le premier obstacle qu'ils ont à vaincre est d'ordre psychologique.

La tragédie du combattant loyal qui découvre que son idéal n'était qu'une supercherie et qui réclame des comptes à la guerre nous a valu de la part des auteurs d'entre vingt et quarante ans une avalanche de pièces de guerre et de retour de la guerre. Une seule fut une réussite : *Draussen vor der Tür* (Devant la porte fermée), écrite à vingt-six ans par Wolfgang Borchert.

Alors que les vrais jeunes se cramponnent à des sujets d'un trop proche passé, on est tenté de classer dans la jeune génération les auteurs de quarante à cinquante ans, dont la plupart ont interrompu leur carrière en 1933 pour reprendre à présent, non sans succès, un nouveau départ.

C'est là, croyons-nous, un phénomène spécifiquement allemand. Il fallait le signaler. Cela dit, il n'est pas douteux qu'une évolution

Ferdinand Bruckner. *Principales œuvres - Principal works:* Krankheit der Jugend, Die Verbrecher, Elizabeth von England, Die Heroische Komödie.

This appears to be a specifically German phenomenon which had to be mentioned, even though an evolution is unquestionably taking shape. Authentically youthful writers will soon be making their appearance, and some of them, as they escape by degrees from their nightmares, are already becoming conscious of their technical inexperience.

It is on their behalf that we have questioned Ferdinand Bruckner, whose plays "The Malady of Youth," "The Criminals," and "Elizabeth of England" have made his name known all over the world, Carl Zuckmayer, actually the most celebrated of German playwrights, and, in the Eastern Zone, the community inspired by Brecht, who wishes to be identified with them. The deliberately provocative answers of this community naturally do not make sense unless the reader places them in their proper perspective.

1. CAN THE CRAFT OF PLAYWRITING BE LEARNED?

Bruckner: Yes, of course the art of dramatic composition can be learned, but talent is not the outcome of instruction.

The Brecht Community: Yes, if the student is already a dramatist.

Zuckmayer: Like every true craft, that of the dramatist is learned and perfected by practice.

2. WHAT IS YOUR OPINION OF AMERICAN METHODS AND PLAYWRITING COURSES?

Bruckner: I am acquainted with them through having watched them in operation under professors Baker, Koch and Conkle. I fear that their theories proceed from a too

se dessine. D'authentiques jeunes vont bientôt faire leur apparition et, dès à présent, certains d'entre eux prennent conscience de leur inexpérience technique en même temps et au fur et à mesure qu'ils échappent à leurs cauchemars.

C'est pour eux que nous avons interrogé Ferdinand Bruckner, que *Le Mal de la Jeunesse, Les Criminels, Elizabeth d'Angleterre* ont fait connaître à travers le monde, Carl Zuckmayer, l'auteur actuellement le plus célébré en Allemagne, et enfin, en zone orientale, la communauté qu'anime Brecht et avec laquelle il entend se confondre. Volontiers impertinentes, les réponses de ce Collectif Brecht ne prennent évidemment de sens que si le lecteur les situe dans leur milieu.

1. LE MÉTIER D'AUTEUR DRAMATIQUE PEUT-IL S'APPRENDRE ?

Bruckner : Bien sûr, l'art de la composition dramatique peut s'apprendre, mais le talent n'est pas le produit d'une éducation.

Collectif Brecht : Oui, si l'on est déjà un auteur dramatique.

Zuckmayer : Comme tout bon métier, le métier de dramaturge s'apprend et se perfectionne par la pratique.

2. QUE PENSEZ-VOUS DE LA MÉTHODE AMÉRICAINE ET DES COURS DE PLAYWRITING

Bruckner : Je la connais pour l'avoir personnellement observée à l'œuvre aussi bien chez le professeur Baker que chez les professeurs Koch et Conkle. Je crains que toutes ces théories ne procèdent d'une vue trop mécaniste sur la formation des dramaturges. On m'objecte qu'O'Neill est sorti de l'école du professeur Baker et que Paul Green a fait ses études chez Koch. Mais ceci n'est pas nécessairement à porter à l'actif de la méthode américaine, car ces deux auteurs dramatiques possèdent des qualités qui les auraient imposés de toute façon.

Cependant le talent seul ne suffit pas. Même Beethoven dut apprendre l'harmonie, le contrepoint et l'instrumentation avant de devenir un musicien de génie.

Collectif Brecht : La méthode américaine laisse l'auteur en dehors du théâtre. Nous envisageons de créer à l'Académie des Beaux-Arts une chaire de composition dramatique dont l'enseignement pratique aura lieu au Berliner Ensemble.

Zuckmayer : J'apprécie davantage l'expérience personnelle. Chacun crée son style individuel, lequel comporte une technique en soi. Dès lors la méthode d'apprentissage devrait être individuelle et différente pour chaque auteur dramatique... Un tel apprendra beaucoup par Shakespeare, tel autre trouvera plus d'enseignements dans une toccata de Bach ou dans une imagerie breughelienne ou encore dans la nature. J'attribue peu de valeur aux cours, surtout après en avoir dirigé un moi-même — tout à fait incidemment — à New York.

3. AU SEUL CONTACT DU PUBLIC, UN JEUNE AUTEUR PEUT-IL ACQUÉRIR LES RUDIMENTS DU MÉTIER ?

Bruckner : Plutôt que de se présenter devant le public avec des œuvres inachevées, le jeune dramaturge en apprendrait davantage en observant sur le public l'effet des grandes œuvres.

Collectif Brecht : Il est plus important pour le jeune auteur d'étudier la technique dramatique.

Zuckmayer : Le public est la « troisième force » du théâtre (à côté de l'auteur et des interprètes) et il constitue un élément de la création.

mechanical conception of dramatic education. People answer me that O'Neill graduated from Professor Baker's school, and that Paul Green studied under Koch. This however is not necessarily to the glory of the American method, since these two authors possess qualities which would have ensured their success in any event.

But talent alone is not sufficient. Beethoven himself had to study harmony, counterpoint and orchestration before becoming a musical genius.

The Brecht Community: It leaves the author outside of the theatre. We plan to create a chair of dramatic composition in the Academy of Fine Arts with practical tuition in the Berliner Ensemble.

Zuckmayer: I prefer personal experience. Every author creates his own individual style which requires a technique of its own. The method of apprenticeship should therefore be different and individual for each author. One writer will learn much from Shakespeare while another will reap more from a Bach toccata or a picture by Brueghel, or even from nature herself. I attach little value to courses, especially since I directed one for a short time myself in New York.

3. CAN A YOUNG AUTHOR ACQUIRE THE RUDIMENTS OF HIS ART SIMPLY THROUGH CONTACT WITH THE PUBLIC?

Bruckner: Young authors would learn more from observing the effect of great plays upon the public than from presenting it with half-baked productions of their own.

The Brecht Community: It is more important for a young author to study dramatic technique.

Zuckmayer: The public is the "third force" of the theatre (together with the author and the actors) yet trial by rehearsal seems to be even more conclusive than trial by the public. By assisting at all rehearsals the author can take stock of what gets across and what does not, of what rings true or false in the dialogue and action, of what must be said and what can be expressed without words, and of what is unplayable. The reactions of good actors are as sure as those of animals. One must have ridden a horse to know what hips and thighs are for, and what hedges and ditches are like.

4. CAN ONE JUDGE AN AUTHOR'S MERIT BY HIS FIRST PLAY?

The Brecht Community: "Titus Andronicus" hardly heralded Shakespeare's talents. On the other hand anyone could have recognized those of Büchner in his "Wozzeck."

5. HOW DID YOU ACHIEVE SUCCESS?

Bruckner: I was for two years producer and "dramaturg" at the New Theatre in Berlin. Afterwards I founded and directed my own theatre and produced about thirty plays in it over a period of six years. That is the proper school for dramatists.

Zuckmayer: The greatest obstacle I had to overcome when I started was the literary fashion of expressionism.

Bertold Brecht. *Principales œuvres - Principal works :* Dreigroschenoper Galileo-Galilei, Mutter Courage und ihre Kinder, Herr Puntila und sein Knecht.

Cependant, plus encore que l'épreuve du public, l'épreuve des répétitions me paraît déterminante. En assistant à toutes les répétitions, un jeune auteur peut noter ce qui « va » et qui ne « va » pas, ce qui rend un son vrai ou faux dans les dialogues et dans l'action, ce qu'il faut dire, ce que l'on peut exprimer sans paroles et ce qui est injouable. Les réactions de bons acteurs sont aussi justes et sûres que celles des animaux. L'on doit avoir fait du cheval pour savoir exactement à quoi servent les reins et les cuisses et ce que c'est qu'une haie ou un fossé.

4. PEUT-ON DÉCELER LES MÉRITES D'UN AUTEUR SUR SA PREMIÈRE PIÈCE ?

Collectif Brecht : *Titus Andronicus* n'annonçait guère le talent de Shakespeare tandis que n'importe qui eût pu reconnaître celui de Büchner dans son *Wozzeck*.

5. COMMENT AVEZ-VOUS RÉUSSI A VOUS IMPOSER ?

Bruckner : J'ai été pendant deux ans metteur en scène et « dramaturg » au Nouveau Théâtre de Berlin. Ensuite j'ai fondé et dirigé mon propre théâtre : en six ans, j'y ai mis en scène une trentaine de pièces. Voilà la véritable école de l'auteur dramatique !

Zuckmayer : La plus grande difficulté que j'ai eu à vaincre, c'est la mode littéraire de l'époque de mes débuts : ce qu'on appelle l'expressionnisme.

Ma première pièce, montée par l'audacieux Léopold Jessner, alors que je n'étais qu'un obscur ancien combattant et étudiant à Heidelberg, fut une faute au point de vue dramatique et un four. Un four est au demeurant plus utile qu'un succès rapide.

Ayant reconnu les causes de mon insuccès, j'en ai tiré le courage nécessaire pour continuer. Ma deuxième pièce, mise en scène cinq ans plus tard par Heinz Hilpert, fut vivement discutée. Mais la même année j'obtins un succès décisif avec ma troisième pièce, *Les Joyeuses Vendanges,* qui obtint le prix Kleist.

My first play, produced by the daring Leopold Jessner when I was nothing but an obscure ex-soldier and student at Heidelberg, was, dramatically speaking, an error and a failure. A failure is in point of fact more profitable than an easy success. Having recognized the reasons of my lack of success I drew courage from them to try again. My second play, produced five years later by Heinz Hilpert, was sharply discussed, but that same year I achieved decisive victory with a third play "The Joyous Vintage" which won the Kleist prize.

6. HOW CAN ONE FACILITATE THE CAREERS OF YOUNG AUTHORS AT THE PRESENT TIME?

Bruckner: A practical and inexpensive method of helping young authors would be for theatres to engage them as assistant stage managers, directors and readers. Instead of giving the smaller parts to actors without talent or future, why not give them to young authors? It is good for a playwright to have been before the footlights.

The Brecht Community: The only way to promote the career of a young author is to give him money.

Zuckmayer: The only means of encouraging young authors is to produce them. The public must be reaccustomed to trying out what is new, unknown, imperfect and unproven.

7. DO THE PRESENT SOLUTIONS OF ASSISTANCE FOR A FIRST PLAY, COMPETITIONS AND SO FORTH SEEM TO YOU ADEQUATE AND SUFFICIENT?

Bruckner: Competitions and prizes never engendered a play. But once a play exists of course one cannot do too much for it. In the German speaking countries (Germany, Austria, and Switzerland) there are over a hundred theatres. If each one of them were to produce a single new play every year, the aspirations of every author of any talent would be fulfilled.

The Brecht Community: Competitions and other encouragements are useless in their present form. If we were to appoint the jury things would be different.

Zuckmayer: Competitions have seldom led to any discovery that was not already impending. It may be wondered whether subsidies to the big theatres should not be supplemented by special endowments to finance experimental performances, regardless of their commercial success.

For my part, I have always supported the idea of taxing cinema, wireless and television profits. This tax would provide a fund to ensure the existence of permanent experimental theatres. In return the taxed organizations would have certain priority rights over the plays and talents which were brought to light.

8. DO YOU CONSIDER THAT INDIRECT REMEDIES SHOULD BE SOUGHT? SUCH AS THE AUTHOR-ACTOR, AUTHOR-PROMPTER OR AUTHOR-NOVELIST?

Bruckner: I have already said how important I consider it that the authors should have some experience of the theatre.

6. COMMENT POURRAIT-ON AUJOURD'HUI FACILITER AUX JEUNES AUTEURS L'ACCÈS DE LA CARRIÈRE ?

Bruckner : Un moyen pratique et peu coûteux d'aider les jeunes auteurs serait que les théâtres les engagent pour les tâches d'assistants : à la mise en scène, à la direction, à la lecture de manuscrits, etc.

Au lieu de donner les petits rôles à des acteurs sans talent... et sans avenir, pourquoi ne pas les confier à de jeunes auteurs ? Pour un auteur dramatique, il est bon d'avoir une fois arpenté les planches.

Collectif Brecht : La seule façon d'encourager la carrière d'un jeune auteur, c'est de lui donner de l'argent.

Zuckmayer : Le seul encouragement à donner aux jeunes auteurs, c'est de les jouer. Il faut réhabituer le public à affronter le nouveau, l'inconnu, l'imparfait, le non-éprouvé.

7. LES SOLUTIONS ACTUELLES : AIDE A LA PREMIÈRE PIÈCE CONCOURS, ETC. VOUS PARAISSENT-ELLES ADÉQUATES ET SUFFISANTES ?

Bruckner : Les concours, les prix, etc., n'ont jamais fait naître une pièce. Mais il va de soi que lorsque la pièce existe, on ne peut faire assez pour elle. Sur notre territoire linguistique, qui comprend l'Allemagne, l'Autriche et la Suisse, il y a plus de cent théâtres. Si chacun de ces théâtres montait ne fût-ce qu'une œuvre nouvelle par an, les vœux de tous les auteurs de talent seraient comblés.

Collectif Brecht : Les concours et autres encouragements sont inutiles dans leur forme actuelle. Il en irait autrement si nous désignions le jury !

Zuckmayer : Les concours ont rarement permis de faire une découverte qui ne fût déjà en marche. On peut se demander si les subventions aux grandes scènes ne devraient pas être complétées par des dotations spéciales destinées à financer des représentations d'essai sans souci des recettes à faire.

Pour ma part, j'ai toujours défendu l'idée de prélever une sorte d'impôt sur les bénéfices du cinéma, de la radio et de la télévision. Cet impôt serait versé à un fonds destiné à assurer l'existence de scènes permanentes d'essai. Comme contre-partie, les institution soumises à cet « impôt » auraient un certain droit de priorité su les œuvres et les talents découverts.

8. LES REMÈDES VOUS SEMBLENT-ILS DEVOIR ÊTRE CHERCHÉS PAR DES VOIES INDIRECTES ? L'AUTEUR-ACTEUR, L'AUTEUR-SOUFFLEUR (OU MACHINISTE), L'AUTEUR-ROMANCIER ?

Bruckner : J'ai déjà dit combien il me paraissait importan que l'auteur ait eu la pratique de la scène.

Collectif Brecht : Dans certains pays, le détour le plus indiqu pour devenir auteur dramatique est celui de garçon de café.

Zuckmayer : Qu'il me soit permis d'évoquer à nouveau me débuts. Pendant toute cette période où j'écrivais mes première pièces, j'ai accumulé une expérience théâtrale pratique, en provinc d'abord, puis à Berlin avec Reinhardt. Au Deutsches Theater, j tins tous les emplois, de la figuration à la mise en scène. Sentir théâtre dans toutes ses fibres et l'avoir dans les doigts est pl important que d'en « savoir beaucoup ».

Contre-épreuve. Georg Kaiser n'a jamais assisté à une répétitio ni à une première et s'est toujours tenu à l'écart du théâtre. Il e

Ci-contre :

On the right :

Carl Zuckmayer. *Principales œuvres - Principal works :* Hauptmann von Köpenich, Des Teufels General, Gesang im Feuerofen.

The Brecht Community: In certain countries the best approach for a dramatic author is to become a café waiter.

Zuckmayer: May I be forgiven for quoting my own experience once again? During the whole period of writing my first plays I was gathering practical experience. First in the provinces, and later with Reinhardt in Berlin. At the Deutsches Theatre I did everything in turn, from acting to production. Feeling the theatre in all its fibres and having it at one's fingertips is more important than knowing a lot about it.

Georg Kaiser is the exception which proves the rule. He was never present at a rehearsal or at a first performance and always kept away from the theatre. Yet he is one of the greatest play-builders that ever lived. His situations remain mathematical however, and his characters schematic and to a great extent unplayable.

9. SHOULD THE YOUNG AUTHOR ATTACH HIMSELF TO A SPECIAL COMPANY AND WRITE ENTIRELY FOR IT?

Bruckner: It would be a good thing if every big company were to engage, not one but several young authors, to try their hands at writing for it.

The Brecht Community: If it were a matter of writing for the Berliner Ensemble we should answer yes.

Zuckmayer: Writing with complete freedom of mind and expression, and following one's own fancy, yet for a given company and in unison with its artistic bent and style, would be the ideal solution for any dramatist whether young or old.

cependant l'un des plus grands constructeurs dramatiques qui aient jamais existé. Mais ses situations restent arithmétiques, ses personnages schématiques et, en grande partie, impossibles à jouer.

9. LE JEUNE AUTEUR DOIT-IL S'ATTACHER A UNE TROUPE ET ÉCRIRE POUR ELLE ?

Bruckner : Il serait bon qu'à chaque grande troupe s'attachent non pas un, mais plusieurs jeunes auteurs qui s'essayent à écrire pour elle.

Collectif Brecht : S'il s'agit du Berliner Ensemble, nous répondons oui.

Zuckmayer : Ecrire — en toute liberté d'esprit et d'expression, en ne suivant que sa propre fantaisie — pour un ensemble d'interprètes déterminé et en unisson avec le sens artistique et la manière de ce groupe serait une solution idéale pour tout dramaturge jeune ou vieux.

INGVELDE MULLER
Dramatic critic of the D. P. A., Berlin.
Critique dramatique au D. P. A., Berlin.

It would be premature to draw conclusions. Further answers have already reached us from Italy, Sweden and Czecho-Slovakia, which will be published in our next number. Meanwhile we are sure that our readers will not fail to give us their opinion.

Tirer des conclusions serait prématuré. Déjà d'Italie, de Tchécoslovaquie, de Suède nous sont arrivées de nouvelles réponses, que nous publierons dans notre prochain numéro. Entre temps nos lecteurs ne manqueront pas — nous en sommes assurés — de nous dire leur sentiment.

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It is possible that we shall then be able, if not to set everyone in agreement at least to deduce certain common factors, and the young authors, and those who wish them well, will at worst have profited from this stirring up of ideas.

Il n'est pas impossible que nous puissions alors, sinon mettre tout le monde d'accord, du moins dégager certaines constantes. De ce remuement d'idées, au minimum, les jeunes auteurs et ceux qui leur veulent du bien auront pu faire leur profit.

MEXICAN PAINTERS AND THE THEATRE

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LA PEINTURE MEXICAINE ET LE THÉATRE

XAVIER VILLAURRUTIA

MEXICAN painting of the past thirty years had to wait for the Venice Biennale of 1950 to receive the recognition which it deserved. Dominated by José Clemente Orozco (1883-1949) and Diego Rivera (1886), it nevertheless constitutes the most important development in American art between 1920 and 1950.

Orozco, who died in 1949, was governed by his revolutionary faith. M. Leal used to say of him that he represented the Mexican tragedy "with generous cruelty and sombre tenderness, through bold and harrowing symbols." His first contact with Europe was in 1923 when, at the age of forty, his talent was already formed. Aztec influences are therefore discernable in him in their purest state, that art of perceiving reality and extracting from it a bold synthesis. In a tormented universe he erects gigantic and passionate figures. It was only towards the end of his life that he discovered the theatre. It appeared to him as a means of provoking a wide and diverse public and wounding it violently with the oppositions of his palette (which explodes with diabolic yellows) and with the contrasts of light and shade which make the interest of his canvases and frescoes. Orozco painted several ballet décors, the subjects of which were all drawn from Mexican history. One of these, the décor for "Obertura Republicana" (Republican Overture) illustrates the best qualities of his painting in which, amongst blacks, whites and greys, a note of vivid and sanguinary colour suddenly creates an emotive disturbance.

Diego Rivera, although restless and searching, has seldom yielded to the seductions of the theatre. He has only given way to them occasionally when tempted to give some play an atmosphere propitious to its development. Nevertheless I remember a set for the Mexican comedy "El Corrido de Juan Saavedra" (The Confusion of Juan Saavedra) in which, using rosy and earthy tones of ocre, he projected his visual universe upon the stage and succeeded in adding yet another picture to the catalogue of his works. His sets and costumes for "H. P.," a ballet

LA peinture mexicaine de ces trente dernières années a dû attendre l'an 1950 — et la Biennale de Venise — pour recevoir, en Europe, l'hommage qu'elle méritait. Et cependant cette peinture, dominée par José Clemente Orozco (1883-1949) et par Diego Rivera (1886), constitue l'événement artistique le plus important des années 1920-1950 en Amérique.

Orozco, mort en 1949, était dominé par sa foi révolutionnaire. M. Léal disait de lui qu'il représentait, « avec une cruauté généreuse et une sombre tendresse, la tragédie mexicaine dans des symboles déchirants et hardis ». Il ne prit contact avec l'Europe qu'en 1923, à quarante ans, alors que son œuvre avait déjà reçu

La Alameda, *fragment of a fresco in the Prado Hotel in Mexico City by Diego Rivera. This work dating from 1947-48 measures seventy-two square metres.*

La Alameda, *fragment d'une fresque de l'Hôtel du Prado à Mexico par Diego Rivera. Cette œuvre, datée de 1947-48, couvre 72 m*

by the composer Carlos Chavez, proceeded from a more ambitious intention. The Mexican public have not yet had a chance to judge the results, for "H. P." was produced in New York and no other stage has yet revived it.

David Alfaro Sigueiros, the youngest of the "Big Three" of Mexican painting, has not so far engaged in theatrical production.

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Apart from these leaders of Mexican painting, it is fitting to point out the contribution of artists who, though less known and less admired, are no less worthy of attention.

The facility, ease and volubility with which Robert Montenegro adapts himself to the most contradictory disciplines (he has designed sets and costumes for numerous theatrical works) make him an enigma for the critics, which they seek in vain to resolve. Manuel Rodriguez Lozano has set his cold and austere palette at the service of Cocteau's "Orphée." He has also designed décors for a ballet by Halfter, "La Madrugada del Panadero" (The Early Baker). A native of Guatemala, Carlos Merida, has become assimilated to our artistic circle and illustrates the scenes of our life, sometimes in delicate decorative painting and sometimes in water colour.

Rufino Tamayo was interested in the theatre in his youth and designed several sets for musical reviews, among which must be mentioned his contribution to the ballet of Jimenez Mabaral "La Luna y el Venado" (The Moon and the Roebuck). These décors make us regret that our greatest colourist does not work for the theatre more often. Carlos Orozco Romero is a delicate painter whose work for the theatre has been as rare as that of Tamayo. On several occasions however he has shown the excellence of his theatrical taste in designing costumes and curtains.

All of these painters, including Orozco and Rivera, have merely transposed their sensibility and the line and colour of their pictures into the domain of the theatre. With a few exceptions they have remained indifferent to the problems raised by passing from the two-dimensional world of painting to the three dimensions of the stage, and have looked on the theatre as an opportunity to produce yet another canvas, in line with the rest of their work, regardless of the essential function of the scene designer.

It would be unjust not to stress the importance of the varied and prolific work of Carlos Gonzalez in the development of modern stage design. A painter and specialist in folklore, he was the first to take into account the special technical problems connected with working for the stage. He was also the first painter in Mexico to imagine sets of a constructivist type, for Eugene O'Neill's tragedy "Lazarus Laughs," produced by Julio Bracho. Through his experiments and achievements Carlos Gonzalez ranks as a forerunner, but like many forerunners he has of late been unjustly forgotten.

A draughtsman and painter, Julio Castellanos, who is fully conscious of stage conditions, has transferred his sen-

Umbral, *by Mexico City Ballet. Decor by José Clemente Orozco. Theatre of the Palace of Fine Arts, Mexico City. 1947.*
Projets de costumes pour Umbral, *par José Clémente Orozco. Ballet de la Ville de Mexico. Théâtre du Palais des Beaux-Arts, Mexico. 1947.*

son empreinte définitive. De telle sorte qu'on retrouve chez lui à l'état pur les influences aztèques, cet art de voir la réalité et d'en tirer une synthèse hardie. Il dresse, dans un univers tourmenté, des figures gigantesques, passionnées. Ce n'est que vers la fin de sa vie qu'il découvrit le théâtre. Cet art lui apparut comme un moyen de provoquer un public nombreux, hétérogène, et de le blesser violemment par les oppositions de sa palette où éclatent des jaunes diaboliques et les contrastes — ombre et lumière — qui font le prix de ses toiles et de ses fresques. Orozco peignit ainsi plusieurs décors de ballets dont les sujets étaient choisis, chaque fois, dans l'histoire mexicaine. L'un de ces décors, pour *Obertura Republicana* (Ouverture républicaine), illustrait les meilleures qualités de sa peinture, où, parmi les noirs, les blancs et les gris, une note de couleur vive et sanglante vient tout à coup jeter le trouble et l'émoi.

Diego Rivera, pourtant inquiet et chercheur, n'a réagi que rarement à la séduction théâtrale. Il n'y a cédé que quelquefois, tenté qu'il était de créer une ambiance favorable à l'éclosion d'une œuvre dramatique. Je me souviens cependant du décor de la comédie mexicaine, *El Corrido de Juan Saavedra* (La Confusion de Juan Saavedra). Rivera, en usant des tons ocrés, roses et terre, jeta sur la scène son univers pictural et réussit à composer un tableau de plus à joindre à son œuvre. Ses décors et ses costumes pour *H. P.*, ballet du compositeur Carlos Chavez, procédaient d'un dessein plus ambitieux. Le public mexicain n'a pas encore eu l'occasion de juger de leur réussite puisque le ballet fut créé à New-York et qu'aucune autre scène ne l'a repris.

David Alfaro Siqueiros, le plus jeune des « Trois Grands » de la peinture mexicaine, n'a pas collaboré, jusqu'à ce jour, à la création d'œuvres dramatiques.

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A côté de ces chefs de file de la peinture mexicaine, il convient de souligner l'apport important fourni par des peintres moins connus, moins admirés et cependant tout aussi dignes d'attention.

La facilité, la volubilité et l'aisance avec laquelle il s'adapte aux disciplines les plus contradictoires font que Robert Montenegro — qui a dessiné des décors et des costumes pour de nombreuses œuvres théâtrales — constitue pour le critique une véritable énigme qu'il s'efforce en vain de résoudre. Manuel Rodriguez Lozano a mis au service de l'*Orphée* de Jean Cocteau sa palette froide et

Costume by Diego Riviera, for Horse Power, *ballet by C. Chavez* (1927-1928).
Projet de costume par Diego Riviera pour Horse Power, *ballet de C. Chavez* (1927-1928).

sitive and delicate sense of line into the theatre. Far from disconcerting him stage problems were a stimulus, and the range of his theatrical activity covers the most various styles : comedy, opera, ballet, and even musical review. (Among other things, he designed an original set for "Velorio", a sketch in the revue "Upa et Apa" written by Villaurrutia with music by Silvestre Revuelas.) His décors for "Hedda Gabler," "El Hierro Candente," (The Red Hot Iron) and "La Calle del Angel" (The Street of the Angel) are examples of an artist's respect for, and submission to, a dramatic text. They invariably succeed in creating an atmosphere which is at the same time real and poetic. Julio Castellanos died young but left several posthumous décors, including those for "Don Quixote," in the childrens' version by Salvador Novo.

The painter and playwright, Agustin Lazo, is of the same generation as Julio Castellanos. In the course of a visit to Paris, Lazo became acquainted with Charles Dullin, at the time when the great French producer was giving "Volpone" at the Atelier. On his return to Mexico, Lazo distinguished himself by a work of great sensitiveness and impeccable taste for the experimental theatre Orientacion and later for various professional theatres. We owe to him the dresses and sets for at least thirty plays and he is still unrivalled as a costume designer. His fantasy, the fineness of his line, and the harmony of his colour schemes, which never exceed their just function upon the stage, recall the work of Jean Hugo and Christian Bérard. He has covered the whole range of drama both classical and modern, and made designs notably for Cocteau's version of "Antigone," Anouilh's "Antigone," Molnar's "Liliom" and Giraudoux's "Madwoman of Chaillot."

Antonio Ruiz and Gabriel Fernandez Ledesma also belong to the generation of Lazo and Castellanos. The former has designed sets for Eugene O'Neill's "Different," Giraudoux's "Amphitryon 38" and more recently for Usigli's "El Gesticulador" (The Gesticulator). The latter, fired with enthusiasm for popular art, has made

austère. Il peignit aussi les décors d'un ballet de Halfter : *La Madrugada del Panadero* (le Boulanger matinal). D'origine guatemaltèque, Carlos Mérida, assimilé à notre milieu artistique, illustre nos scènes tantôt par une peinture décorative délicate, tantôt par les coloris de ses aquarelles.

Rufino Tamayo s'est intéressé dans sa jeunesse au théâtre et il dessina plusieurs décors pour une revue musicale ; il convient notamment de citer sa contribution au ballet de Jimenez Mabaran : *La Luna y el Venado* (la Lune et le Chevreuil). Devant ces décors, on ne peut que regretter les rares interventions théâtrales de notre grand coloriste. Carlos Orozco Romero, peintre délicat, eut au théâtre des interventions aussi rares que celles de Tamayo. Il prouva cependant en diverses occasions, par des dessins de costumes et de rideaux de scène, son bon goût théâtral.

Tous ces peintres, même Orozco et Rivera, n'ont fait que transposer dans le domaine théâtral leur sensibilité, la ligne et les coloris de leurs tableaux. A quelques exceptions près, ils sont restés indifférents aux problèmes posés par le passage de l'univers à deux dimensions de la peinture à celui à trois dimensions de la scène; et ils n'ont considéré le théâtre que comme un moyen de créer une toile nouvelle, un tableau qui continue leur œuvre picturale, sans se soucier de la fonction essentielle du scénographe.

Il serait injuste de ne pas souligner l'importance, dans le développement de la scénographie mexicaine moderne, de l'œuvre nombreuse et variée de Carlos Gonzalez. Peintre et folkloriste, il fut le premier à tenir compte des problèmes techniques proprement scénographiques. Il conçut, le premier aussi au Mexique, des décors du type constructiviste, en décorant la tragédie d'Eugène O'Neill : *Lazare rit,* mise en scène par Julio Bracho. Par ses expériences et ses réalisations, Carlos Gonzalez fait figure de précurseur. Comme tous les précurseurs — ou presque tous — il a été injustement oublié ces derniers temps.

Dessinateur et peintre, Julio Castellanos, pleinement conscient de la réalité scénographique, transposa au théâtre sa ligne et sa sensibilité délicates. Loin de le déconcerter, les problèmes techniques le stimulaient et ses interventions théâtrales s'étendent aux œuvres et aux genres les plus divers : comédie, opéra, ballet et même la revue musicale (il décora, entre autres, d'une façon originale, *Velorio,* un tableau de la revue *Upa et Apa,* texte de Villaurrutia, musique de Silvestre Revueltas). Les décors de Julio Castellanos pour *Hedda Gabler, El Hierro candente* (le Fer rouge), *La Calle del Angel* (La Rue de l'Ange) sont véritablement des exemples du respect et de la soumission de l'artiste au texte dramatique. Ils réussissent toujours à créer une atmosphère réelle et poétique à la fois. Mort en pleine jeunesse, Julio Castellanos a laissé quelques décors posthumes comme ceux de *Don Quichotte,* dans la version pour enfants de Salvador Novo.

Le peintre et auteur dramatique Agustin Lazo est de la même génération que Julio Castellanos. Lazo est un artiste profondément conscient de la subtilité des rapports entre l'œuvre dramatique et le décor. Au cours d'un voyage à Paris, Lazo connut Charles Dullin, au temps où, au théâtre de l'Atelier, le grand animateur français montait *Volpone.* A son retour, il se signala, d'abord pour le théâtre expérimental « Orientacion », ensuite pour divers autres théâtres professionnels, par une œuvre d'une grande sensibilité et d'un goût sans tache. On lui doit les décors et les costumes d'une bonne trentaine de pièces et, à ce jour, on ne lui voit aucun rival pour ses dessins de costumes de théâtre. Sa fantaisie, la finesse de son trait, ses coloris qui composent un ensemble qui ne dépasse jamais la juste fonction théâtrale font songer, compte tenu de sa personnalité, aux œuvres de Jean Hugo et de Christian Bérard. Il parcourut tous les échelons, du classique au moderne, et décora, entre autres, *Antigone,* dans la version de Cocteau, *Liliom,* de Molnar, *La Folle de Chaillot,* de Giraudoux, et *Antigone,* d'Anouilh.

A Comedy of Errors, *by Shakespeare. Décor by Gabriel Fernandez Ledesma. 1934.*
La Comédie des Erreurs, *de Shakespeare. Décor de Gabriel Fernandez Ledesma. 1934.*

Los de Abajo, *by M. Azuela. Production by Victor Moya. Décor by Julio Prieto. Theatre of the Palace of Fine Arts, Mexico City. 1950.*
Los de Abajo, *de M. Azuela. Mise en scène de Victor Moya. Décor par Julio Prieto. Théâtre du Palais des Beaux-Arts, Mexico. 1950.*

Décor by Julio Castellanos for El Velorio, *a scene from the musical review* Upa y Apa, *theatre of the Palace of Fine Arts, Mexico City :* 1936.
Décor de Julio Castellanos pour El Velorio, *numéro de la revue musicale* Upa Y Apa, *théâtre du Palais des Beaux-Arts, Mexico :* 1936.

several interesting theatrical experiments, though he now does so more rarely.

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Juan Soriano and Julio Prieto, two young painters of the generation immediately following that of Lazo and Castellanos, have recently attracted notice and already acquired distinction. Soriano achieved complete success in the décor of a Mexican ballet by the composer Jimenez Mabarak, "El Pajaro y las Doncellas" (The Bird and the Maidens) but failed in the designs for Calderon's "Life's a Dream." Despite this check however we have great hopes of him. His passion for the theatre should result in talented productions.

An extremely able painter, draughtsman and engraver, Prieto is, among those of his generation, the artist who brings most technical knowledge to the theatre. His unquenchable curiosity, his power of assimilating experience and successful dramatic experiments, make him our foremost stage designer. His talent is for designing scenery rather than costumes. Although still young he has already a number of successes to his credit, in particular the sets and dresses for Hebbel's "Judith," for O'Neill's "Emperor Jones" and for the two operas "Hansel and Gretel" and "Mephistopheles." Director of the Department of Theatrical Production at the National Institute of Fine Arts, he has created a studio of scene design where, under his direction, young painters are already learning to explore the problems of stage production, and especially the relations between the painters' artistic sensibility and the means of creating theatrical magic.

Antonio Ruiz et Gabriel Fernandez Ledesma sont également de la génération de Lazo et de Castellanos. Le premier décora avec talent *Different,* d'O'Neill, *Amphitryon 38,* de Giraudoux, et, plus récemment, *El Gesticulador* (le Gesticulateur), d'Usigli. Le second, féru d'arts populaires, fit également quelques incursions intéressantes, qui aujourd'hui se raréfient, dans le domaine de la décoration théâtrale.

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Juan Soriano et Julio Prieto, deux jeunes peintres de la génération qui suit immédiatement celle de Lazo et de Castellanos, se sont récemment signalés et, déjà, distingués. Soriano réussit pleinement dans la décoration d'un ballet mexicain du compositeur Jimenez Mabarak, *El Pajaro y las Doncellas* (L'oiseau et les Donzelles), mais il échoua dans la décoration de *La Vie est un Songe,* de Calderon de la Barca. Pourtant, malgré cet échec, nous espérons de Soriano de nouvelles réussites, car sa passion du théâtre doit nous valoir des réalisations talentueuses.

Dessinateur, peintre et graveur extrêmement habile, Prieto est l'artiste de sa génération qui, actuellement, aborde le théâtre avec le plus important bagage technique. Son intarissable curiosité, son pouvoir d'assimilation des expériences et des résultats acquis dans le domaine de la scénographie font de lui l'artiste décorateur le plus en vue. Son habileté se traduit plus dans les dessins de décors que dans ceux de costumes. Julio Prieto a réussi déjà quoique jeune, des réalisations considérables. Il convient de citer parmi celles-ci, les décors et les costumes de *Judith,* de Hebbel, de *L'Empereur Jones,* d'O'Neill, et des opéras *Méphistophélès* et *Hansel et Gretel.* Dirigeant le département de la production théâtrale de l'Institut national des Beaux-Arts, Julio Prieto a créé un atelier de scénographie où les plus jeunes s'exercent déjà, sous sa direction, à approfondir la connaissance des problèmes de la scène et particulièrement celui des rapports de la sensibilité artistique du peintre avec les moyens de créer la magie théâtrale.

XAVIER VILLAURRUTIA

Playwright

Auteur dramatique

Le Jeune Homme et la Mort, *argument de Jean Cocteau. Ballets Roland Petit. Théâtre des Champs-Elysées, Paris, 1946.*
Le Jeune Homme et la Mort, *story by Jean Cocteau. Ballets Roland Petit. Théâtre des Champs Elysées, Paris, 1946.*

WAKHÉVITCH DÉCORATEUR DE THÉATRE

★

WAKHEVITCH AS STAGE DESIGNER

ANDRÉ BOLL

FOR twenty-five years, Christian Bérard, in company with Picasso, Derain, Léger, Cassandre and Colin, dominated French theatre decoration, rather by his acute sense of the stage than by his incontestable talent as a painter. The popularity which this curious and winning personality enjoyed in his lifetime was doubtless not exempt from snobbery, yet no one would deny the evident influence of his style on many of his contemporaries.

Since the Liberation however, a number of different artists have established themselves. To name only a few of the most recent, there are Brianchon (two Marivaux productions at the Marigny Theatre), Mariano Andreu ("Malatesta," Marigny, 1950). Roland Oudot ("L'Homme de Cendres," Comédie-Française, 1949), Suzanne Lalique

PENDANT vingt-cinq ans, en compagnie des Picasso, Derain, Léger, Cassandre, Colin..., la personnalité de Christian Bérard, mort prématurément à l'âge de quarante-six ans en 1949, a dominé, plus encore par son sens aigu de la scène que par ses dons incontestables de peintre, la décoration théâtrale française. Sans doute ce curieux et attachant personnage a-t-il joui de son vivant d'une vogue à laquelle le snobisme n'était pas étranger... Néanmoins nul ne saurait nier que l'influence de son style ne se perçoive chez maints de ses contemporains.

Toutefois, depuis la Libération, et pour n'évoquer que quelques récents exemples, nombre d'artistes se sont affirmés — tels Brianchon (deux *Marivaux* à Marigny), Mariano Andreu (*Malatesta,* Marigny, 1950), Roland Oudot (*L'Homme de Cendres,* Comédie-Française, 1949), Suzanne Lalique (deux *Beaumarchais,* à la Comédie-Française), Félix Labisse (*Le Bossu,* Marigny, 1950),

(two Beaumarchais productions at the Comédie-Française), Félix Labisse ("Le Bossu," Marigny, 1950), Jean-Denis Malclès ("Les Caves du Vatican," Comédie-Française, 1950) and Yves Bonnat ("Jeanne au Bûcher," Opéra, 1950). New ones have appeared such as André Clavé ("Carmen," Ballets Roland Petit, 1949), Francine Galliard-Risler ("La Chanson du Mal Aimé," Opéra-Comique, 1951), Lilla de Nobili ("La P'tite Lili," A. B. C., 1951), Gischia (Gide's "Œdipe," Marigny, 1951) and several more, who prove in their varied ways the extraordinary vitality of French theatrical design.

In the productions of the past two years is it possible to discern the elements of a style peculiar to the French school of designers? In our view they are characterized by their illustrative tendency. Most recent décors bear scarcely any trace of the "constructivist" wave that broke over France in the mid-twenties. It seems, rather, that what Léon Moussinac justly termed "the painter's decorative adventure in the theatre," which preceded the "constructivist" era, is now being repeated, with different artists naturally, who link up with the traditions of the late nineteenth century, of painted scenery and trompe-l'œil effects, graced and even loaded with detail. The notion of an "enlarged sketch" suggested by the sets of Guérin, Laprade, Bonnard and Rouault is not so much in favour as during the previous "decorative adventure."

Indeed the painter's art tends once more to reign supreme upon the stage, often making the extraordinary developments in lighting quite superfluous. Thus an evolution which seemed inevitable ten years ago has been counteracted, and coloured lighting has in no way supplanted the scene painter's palette.

The conception of constructed scenery has been most happily and permanently acclimatized in the decoration of interiors (Boulevard plays) which may be regarded as furnishers' showrooms and thereby allied to the realist scenery so dear to the heart of the great Antoine. With rare exceptions, and despite the good taste with which these sets are usually executed, they remain impersonal in that, apart from the properties actually required in the

Jean-Denis Malclès (*Les Caves du Vatican,* Comédie-Française, 1950), Yves Bonnat (*Jeanne au Bûcher,* Opéra, 1950) — ou révélés — tels André Clavé (*Carmen,* Ballets Roland Petit, 1949), Francine Galliard-Risler (*La Chanson du Mal Aimé,* Opéra-Comique, 1951), Lilla de Nobili (*La P'tite Lili,* A. B. C., 1951), Gischia (*Œdipe,* de Gide, Marigny, 1951) — d'autres encore... montrant ainsi, sous les aspects le plus divers, l'extraordinaire vitalité de l'école française.

Dans la production de ces deux dernières années pouvons-nous déceler la présence d'un style propre à la décoration théâtrale française ? A nos yeux, ce qui domine, c'est son caractère illustratif. Effectivement la plupart des décors récents ne portent plus guère qu'une trace légère de la vague de « constructivisme » qui déferla en France au cours des années 1925 et suivantes. Il apparaît au contraire que ce que Léon Moussinac a dénommé si judicieusement « l'aventure décorative des peintres au théâtre », qui a précédé la période de « constructivisme », est en train de se répéter avec d'autres artistes, cela va de soi, renouant la tradition du décor peint de la fin du XIXe siècle, du décor en trompe-l'œil agrémenté, si ce n'est surchargé, de détails. Ou si l'on préfère, il semble bien que le côté « esquisse agrandie » — je pense aux décors de Guérin, de Laprade, de Bonnard, de Rouault... — ne rencontre pas la même faveur que lors de la précédente « aventure décorative ».

En fait l'art du peintre a de nouveau tendance à régner sur la scène, rendant souvent inutiles nombre des extraordinaires progrès accomplis dans le domaine de l'éclairage. De sorte que, contrairement à une évolution qu'on pouvait croire, il y a une dizaine d'années, inévitable, la lumière colorée des projecteurs n'a nullement remplacé la palette du décorateur.

Là où la conception du décor construit s'est le mieux acclimatée, acclimatée d'une façon quasi constante, c'est dans les décors d'intérieurs (pièces du théâtre du Boulevard), qui peuvent être considérés comme de véritables stands d'ensembliers, rejoignant ainsi le décor réaliste si cher au grand André Antoine. Sauf de rares exceptions, ces décors, en dépit du goût qu'habituellement on y déploie, sont impersonnels en ce sens qu'en dehors des nécessités de plantation requises par la mise en scène, ils ont rarement beoin de créer une atmosphère particulière.

En haut et en bas : *Wakhévitch travaille à* Boris Godounov.
Above and below : *Wakhevitch working at* Boris Godounov.

Jeanne la Folle, *d'Aimé Jean. Comédie-Française, Paris, 1949.* (Photo Lipnitzki.)
Jeanne la Folle, *by Aimé Jean. Comédie-Française,* Paris, *1949.* (Photograph by Lipnitzki.)

play, they are seldom called upon to create any particular atmosphere.

In general it may be said that it is this question of atmosphere, of the tone and climate proper to every play worthy of the name, which scene designers tend to neglect. Unquestionably it is the producer's job to choose the painter whose personality fits most harmoniously with the author's, but it is also the painter's duty to efface himself before the author, and refrain from creating too personal a work. "To consider himself," as Cassandre puts it, "only as the servitor and interpreter of the play."

Among painters attracted to the stage, Wakhevitch, who excites a growing and wholly justified enthusiasm among his contemporaries, has always known how to school his talent in this art of modesty.

How is one to place him? In reality he owes very little to Bérard. His talents are more akin to those of Cassandre in the marked leaning which he shares with his elder for architectonic effects. He is however less rigorous. Where Cassandre uses trompe-l'œil on canvas with amazing mastery, Wakhevitch will substitute constructed scenery with volume, thicknesses and salients and real stuffs with their folds and draperies, without on that account foregoing the painter's artifice. He mingles reality and illusion so adroitly that the shrewdest eye is taken in and fails to distinguish one from the other. Moreover Wakhevitch arranges his palette with more variety. While Cassandre expresses himself entirely in sober harmonies, in which browns, sombre reds and ocres predominate, Wakhevitch uses all the colours of the solar spectrum, setting them as vibrating points of light against backgrounds of intense black. Not that his

D'une manière générale nous pouvons dire que c'est cette question d'atmosphère, d'ambiance, de climat, propre à toute œuvre dramatique digne de ce nom, que le peintre de théâtre aurait propension à négliger. Sans doute est-ce au metteur en scène, au directeur à choisir le peintre dont la personnalité se conjugue le plus harmonieusement avec celle de l'auteur, mais c'est aussi au peintre d'accepter de s'effacer devant l'auteur, de renoncer à faire œuvre trop personnelle, « de ne se considérer, Cassandre dixit, que comme le serviteur de l'œuvre, que comme un interprète ».

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Parmi les artistes attirés par la scène, Georges Wakhévitch, qui connaît de la part de ses contemporains un engouement grandissant pleinement justifié, a précisément su toujours plier son talent à cette école de la modestie.

Comment situer Wakhévitch ? En vérité Wakhévitch ne doit pas grand'chose à Bérard. Son talent s'apparenterait plutôt à celui d'un Cassandre par ce penchant prononcé, qu'il partage avec son aîné, pour les décors architectoniques, avec cependant moins de rigueur. Mais là où Cassandre exploite, avec une étonnante maîtrise, le trompe-l'œil pictural sur toile, Wakhévitch lui substitue des parties construites avec leurs volumes, leurs épaisseurs, leurs saillies, d'authentiques étoffes avec leurs plis, leurs drapés, sans pour autant renoncer aux artifices du peintre, mais en entremêlant si adroitement le réel et le figuré que l'œil le plus avisé s'y laisse prendre, incapable qu'il est de discerner le vrai du faux. En outre Wakhévitch ordonne sa palette d'une façon plus variée. Autant Cassandre s'exprime complètement en usant d'harmonies sobres, dans lesquelles les bruns, les rouges sombres et les ocres dominent, autant Wakhévitch étend ses coloris à la gamme entière du spectre solaire, les utilisant en taches lumineuses qui vibrent sur des fonds d'un noir intense. Non pas que ces harmonies soient exagérément bigarrées. Jamais il ne cède à cette débauche colorée dont les sorti-

Costumes de Wakhévitch pour Barbe-Bleue.
Costumes by Wakhévitch for Barbe-Bleue.

harmonies are over loud. He never yields, like Bakst for instance, to a debauch of colour whose enchantment bewilders the sight. He consciously denies himself this orgy, no matter how tempting, and knows exactly how to make that careful choice which will heighten the atmosphere he wishes to obtain.

Georges Wakhevitch was born in Odessa in 1907. His adolescence was spent in Paris in the neighbourhood of Montparnasse where he became the assiduous pupil of the English painter Edwin Scott, himself a pupil of Whistler. At the age of nineteen he decided to visit Corsica. Breaking his journey at Nice, he met in a film studio a decorator named Jean Périer who immediately engaged him to execute life-size russo-byzantine frescoes for the walls of Moscow Cathedral required in a film by Raymond Bernard, "Tarakanova." It was thus that Wakhevitch embarked upon a career of film designing which he has not ceased to pursue, through "Madame Bovary," "Louise," "Les Visiteurs du Soir," "L'Eternel Retour" and "L'Aigle à Deux Têtes» down to his present designs for the colour film of "Barbe-Bleue" (Bluebeard).

His first sets for the theatre were commissioned by

lèges étourdissent la vue et qui fut celle d'un Bakst, par exemple. Consciemment il se refuse à cette orgie, aussi séduisante soit-elle et sait parfaitement opérer le choix parcimonieux qui met en valeur l'ambiance qu'il souhaite obtenir.

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Georges Wakhévitch est né à Odessa en 1907. Son adolescence il la passe à Paris, au quartier Montparnasse, où il devient l'élève assidu d'un peintre anglais, Edwin Scott, lui-même élève du grand Whistler. A dix-neuf ans il décide d'entreprendre un voyage en Corse. S'arrêtant à Nice il rencontre, dans un studio de cinéma de cette ville, un décorateur du nom de Jean Périer qui, sur le champ, l'embauche afin de lui faire exécuter « grandeur nature » des fresques russo-byzantines qui doivent figurer sur les murs de la cathédrale de Moscou reconstituée en vue d'y tourner les scènes d'un film de Raymond Bernard : *Tarakanova.* C'est ainsi que Wakhévitch commença une carrière de décorateur de cinéma qui avec *Madame Bovary, Louise,* en passant par *Les Visiteurs du Soir, L'Eternel Retour, L'Aigle à deux Têtes,* n'a cessé de se poursuivre jusqu'à la réalisation actuelle de *Barbe-Bleue,* film en couleurs.

Au théâtre son premier décor lui a été commandé par Lugné Poe pour *Le Roi Camelot,* au Théâtre de l'Œuvre. Par la suite il signa pour le « Rideau gris », de Marseille, de Ducreux et Rous

L'Aventure, *de Terence Rattigan. St James's Theatre, Londres. 1949.*
Adventure Story, *by Terence Rattigan. St James's Theatre, London. 1949.*

Lugné-Poe for "Le Roi Camelot" at the Œuvre Theatre. Subsequently he designed numerous sets for Roussin and Ducreux's theatre in Marseilles, "Le Rideau Gris," amongst which those for "Macbeth" made a particular impression.

He has since made décors for Roussin's "Am Stram Gram," "Une Grande Fille Toute Simple" and even for "La Petite Hutte" at the Théâtre des Nouveautés in 1947. During the occupation, as a refugee in Lyons, he executed, for the Théâtre des Célestins directed by Charles Gantillon, numerous classical settings for "Le Barbier de Séville," "Fantasio," etc.

In such a wealth of production one is obliged to choose and our choice must be dictated by the quality of the plays he has been commissioned to illustrate. But first of all let us make a general survey of his artistic methods.

In the rue Saint André des Arts, almost at the corner of the Place Saint-Michel, is a small studio in a state of engaging disorder, where Wakhevitch designs his models. He seems to have no particular method of work, and if he had, it would be of an explosive nature. In point of fact when Wakhevitch is busy on a subject that pleases him he works enthusiastically. He creates in a spontaneous and impulsive fashion. No rough draft

de nombreux décors dont celui pour *Macbeth* fut très remarqué. Depuis il fit pour André Roussin les décors d'*Am Stram Gram,* d'*Une Grande Fille toute simple* jusqu'à ceux de *La Petite Hutte* au Théâtre des Nouveautés (1947). Pendant la période d'occupation, réfugié à Lyon, Wakhévitch exécute, pour le Théâtre des Célestins que dirige Charles Gantillon, de nombreux décors classiques (*Le Barbier de Séville, Fantasio...*).

Devant une production aussi considérable, un choix s'impose et ce choix nous est dicté par l'importance des œuvres que Wakhévitch a eu charge d'illustrer. Préalablement nous examinerons, d'une façon générale, les méthodes de travail familières de l'artiste.

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Rue Saint-André-des-Arts, presque au coin de la place Saint-Michel. C'est là, dans un petit atelier où règne un désordre sympathique, que Wakhévitch conçoit ses maquettes. Des méthodes de travail, il ne semble pas en avoir, et s'il en avait elles seraient de caractère plutôt explosif. Effectivement lorsque Wakhévitch œuvre pour un sujet qui lui plaît, c'est avec enthousiasme. Il crée de façon toute spontanée, toute impulsive... Point de premier croquis, retouché, agrandi, retourné... Point de première esquisse, de seconde, de troisième. Non, cela vient d'un seul jet et d'une

Boris Godounov, de Moussorgsky. Covent Garden, Londres, 1948. Décor pour le dernier acte. (Photo Mandinian.)
Boris Godounov, by Moussorgsky. Covent Garden, London, 1948. Décor for the last act. (Photograph by Mandinian.)

touched up, enlarged or pulled about. No first, second or third sketches. No, it all comes of a piece almost in its final form. Nevertheless during the whole period during which the idea is taking shape, defining and settling itself, the artist is unremittingly anxious and even anguished, until the whole thing has fallen into place and he is delivered of it.

Then Wakhevitch the creator gives way to Wakhevitch the technician. If the gifts of the former are outside his control, the latter is contrastingly patiented, meticulous, careful and positive. He himself draws up the plans and measurements for the stage carpenters, and supervises the execution of the paintings, when he does not take a hand in them himself, which is highly unusual. He also presides over the actual setting up on the stage and, together with the producer, arranges the lighting.

His creative gifts, allied with solid technical knowledge, make of him the complete stage designer.

In Paris Wakhevitch's talent has triumphed especially in three productions. Cocteau's ballet "Le Jeune Homme et la Mort" (Théâtre des Champs-Elysées, 1946), "Jeanne la Folle" (Comédie-Française, 1949) and "La Coqueuse de Diamants" (Ballets Roland Petit, 1950).

Cocteau recounts that one day Boris Kochno, the artistic director of the Ballets des Champs-Elysées, asked him to find something striking and impressive for the ballet, manière quasi définitive. Toutefois, durant toute la période pendant laquelle l'idée prend forme, se précise, s'établit, l'artiste ne cesse d'être inquiet, si ce n'est angoissé, jusqu'au moment où il considère la chose au point. Alors il est délivré.

Et, derechef, le Wakhevitch créateur cède la place au Wakhévitch technicien. Autant le premier ne contrôle pas ses dons, autant le second est méticuleux, pondéré, soigneux, positif. C'est lui qui dresse les plans, les feuilles de mesures destinées au constructeur, c'est lui qui surveille l'exécution de la peinture lorsqu'il n'y participe pas — ce qui est rarement le cas — c'est lui qui, sur scène, enfin, préside à l'équipement des décors, et, en accord avec le metteur en scène, règle les éclairages.

Ce sont ces dons de créateur, liés à de sérieuses connaissances techniques, qui font de Wakhevitch un décorateur de théâtre complet.

★

A Paris le talent de Wakhevitch s'est imposé notamment par trois œuvres : *Le Jeune Homme et la Mort* ballet de Jean Cocteau (Théâtre des Champs-Elysées, 1946), *Jeanne la Folle* (Comédie-Française, 1949), *La Coqueuse de Diamants* (Ballets Roland Petit, 1950).

« Un soir, raconte Cocteau, Boris Kochno (directeur artistique des Ballets des Champs-Elysées) me dit chercher pour le ballet quelque chose de frappant, de saisissant : un nouveau *Spectre de la*

another "Spectre de la Rose," which would be a renewed expression of the times. Thus "Le Jeune Homme et la Mort" was born.

Wakhevitch, sounded for the décors, engaged wholeheartedly in the project. He designed an astounding set for a painter's studio, in which disrepair attained a sort of sumptuosity in sordidness and despair. Then magically the walls faded out revealing a fantastic view of the rooves of Paris among which rose the silhouette of the Eiffel Tower illuminated by animated advertisement lights. It is impossible to imagine a more evocative setting or one more perfectly attuned to the spirit of the scenario and the style of the choreography.

The sets and costumes for "La Croqueuse de Diamants" constitute a success of the same order, in a major instead of a minor key. Three sets: a dubious street corner of blackish buildings in the neighbourhood of the Paris Halles, a local bistro with its zinc counter, mock marble panels and imitation red leather seats, and the den of the "croqueuse" with its mildewed walls.

Wakhevitch reeks of Paris. He sniffs it like a thoroughbred hound and translates its characteristics with a sure style in which realism forever borders on fantasy. Should one connect him with surrealism? Assuredly not in the current sense of the term, but in the sense of "more real than reality." The dresses, treated in the same spirit,

Rose qui serait l'expression renouvelée de l'époque. » Ainsi naquit *Le Jeune Homme et la Mort.*

Wakhévitch, pressenti pour les décors, entre de plain-pied dans le jeu. Il compose un étonnant décor d'atelier de peintre dont le délabrement atteint à une sorte de somptuosité du sordide, du désespéré. Puis les murs s'évanouissent magiquement laissant apparaître une vue fantastique des toits de Paris, au milieu desquels se dresse la silhouette, illuminée par une annonce publicitaire mouvante, de la Tour Eiffel. On ne pouvait rêver un cadre à la fois plus évocateur, en accord plus parfait avec l'esprit du scénario et le style de la chorégraphie.

Les décors et les costumes de *La Croqueuse de Diamants* constituent, sur le ton majeur au lieu du mineur, une réussite du même ordre. Trois décors : aux environs des Halles de Paris, un carrefour interlope aux immeubles noirâtres; la salle d'un bistro de quartier avec son « zinc », ses banquettes en moleskine écarlate, ses panneaux de faux marbre ; le repaire, aux murs moisis, de la « croqueuse ».

Wakhévitch sent Paris. Il le flaire comme un chien de race et il en traduit les caractéristiques avec une sûreté de style dont le réalisme côtoie toujours le féerique. Peut-on parler, à son sujet, de surréalisme ? Certainement pas selon la signification habituelle du terme, mais dans le sens « plus réel que réel ». Les costumes, traités dans le même esprit, étaient à la fois cocasses, suggestifs, harmonieux.

Pour *Jeanne la Folle* Wakhévitch abordait la pièce historique.

Le Rayon des jouets, *de Jacques Deval. Théâtre de la Madeleine, Paris. 1951.*
Le Rayon des jouets, *by Jacques Deval. Théâtre de la Madeleine, Paris. 1951.*

L'Invitation au Château, *d'Anouilh. Théâtre de Broadway, New-York. 1950.*
Ring round the Moon, *by Anouilh. Broadway Theatre, New-York. 1950.*

Celle qu'on prend dans ses bras, *d'Henry de Montherlant. Théâtre de la Madeleine, Paris. 1950.*
Celle qu'on prend dans ses bras, *by Henry de Montherlant. Théâtre de la Madeleine, Paris. 1950.*

Le Fardeau de la Liberté, *de Tristan Bernard. Théâtre de la Madeleine, Paris. 1949.*
Le Fardeau de la Liberté, *by Tristan Bernard. Théâtre de la Madeleine, Paris. 1949.*

Le Consul, *de Menotti. Scala de Milan, 1951. Décor pour l'acte II.*
The Consul, *by Menotti. Scala Theatre, Milan, 1951. Décor for Act II.*

Dieu le savait, *de Salacrou. Théâtre Saint-Georges, Paris. 1951.* (Photo Lipnitzki.)
Dieu le savait, *by Salacrou. Théâtre Saint-Georges, Paris. 1951.* (Photograph by Lipnitzki.)

were at once amusing, suggestive and harmonious.

In "Jeanne la Folle" Wakhevitch first tried his hand at a historical piece, for which he conceived décors of heightened colour that recalled, without ever copying, the rich illuminations of the Middle Ages. Did he perhaps stick a little too closely to historical documentation? On the other hand, did not the subject require it? In the same manner he executed the sumptuous dresses for the colour film of "Barbe-Bleue," dresses which might equally well have been designed for the theatre.

His talent is extremely supple; he can design with equal felicity a typical salon of a rich antiquary ("Celles qu'on prend dans ses bras", Théâtre de la Madeleine, 1950) and a bourgeois interior in Havres, gutted by bombs, ("Dieu le savait," Théâtre Saint-Georges, 1951) in which, as we mentioned above, he associated with extraordinary success, trompe-l'œil effects and constructed scenery

So remarkable a personality could not fail to be drawn abroad. In 1948 he was commissioned by Covent Garden to provide sets for "Boris Godounov." His heredity and a certain atavism predisposed him to this work and he succeeded in giving expression to the grandiose, barbaric and popular elements of Moussorgsky's masterpiece.

In London the following year he also did sets and dresses for Rattigan's "Adventure Story" and for "The Powers of Darkness." He went to Venice in 1951 to execute décors for Menotti's "Medium" and to Milan in 1951 to do them for "The Consul" by the same composer.

This list of triumphs, which is far from complete, will give some idea of the activities of Georges Wakhevitch, who has definitely taken his place among the most original French stage designers of his generation.

Cette fois il imagina des décors plus hauts en couleur qui évoquaient, sans jamais les copier, les riches enluminures du moyen âge. Peut-être pour les costumes resta-t-il un peu trop fidèle aux données d'une documentation archéologique ? Mais la pièce ne l'exigeait-elle pas ? C'est dans le même esprit que Wakhévitch fait exécuter les somptueux costumes du film en couleurs, *Barbe-Bleue,* costumes qui auraient parfaitement pu être conçus pour le théâtre.

En outre la souplesse du talent de cet artiste est très grande puisqu'il peut indistinctement trouver le cadre type d'un salon de riche antiquaire (*Celles qu'on prend dans ses bras,* Théâtre de la Madeleine, 1950) et celui d'un intérieur bourgeois du Havre, éventré par les bombes (*Dieu le savait,* Théâtre Saint-Georges, 1951), décor où il sut associer, comme nous le signalions précédemment, avec un rare bonheur, les parties constantes et le trompe-l'œil.

★

Une telle personnalité ne pouvait pas ne pas être sollicitée par l'étranger. En 1948 Wakhévitch fut chargé par le Covent Garden de Londres de décorer *Boris Godounov.* Les origines de l'artiste, un certain atavisme le prédisposaient à cette tâche. Ce qu'on peut dire, c'est qu'il sut traduire plastiquement le côté grandiose, barbare et populaire de l'immortel chef-d'œuvre de Moussorgsky.

A Londres également, l'année suivante, Wakhévitch composait les décors et les costumes de *Adventure Story,* de Rattigan, et de *La Puissance des Ténèbres,* tandis que les années suivantes il était convié à Venise (1950) et à Milan (1951) pour illustrer *Le Médium,* de Menotti, dans la première de ces villes, et *Le Consul* du même Menotti, dans la seconde.

Ce palmarès, incomplet d'ailleurs, en dit long sur l'activité de Georges Wakhévitch qui se place, définitivement, parmi les décorateurs de théâtre français les plus originaux de sa génération.

ANDRÉ BOLL

décorateur et historien de théâtre français. Auteur de nombreux ouvrages concernant le décor de théâtre, le décor de ballet, la mise en scène, les spectacles populaires, l'art lyrique, etc.

Designer and historian of the French theatre. Author of numerous works concerning theatre and ballet décor, production, popular shows and opera, etc.

II

LE JOURNAL DES VOYAGES LE RENDEZ-VOUS D'OSLO

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TRAVEL DIARY THE OSLO RENDEZ-VOUS

ANDRÉ JOSSET

SECRÉTAIRE GÉNÉRAL
DE L'INSTITUT INTERNATIONAL DU THÉATRE

SECRETARY-GENERAL
OF THE INTERNATIONAL THEATRE INSTITUTE

J'AVAIS voulu, ce jour-là, me rendre compte des inconvénients et des avantages d'un voyage par train entre Paris et Oslo, où devait avoir lieu notre IVe Congrès. Depuis longtemps, l'I. I. T. lutte pour que soient levées les barrières de toutes sortes qui séparent les États et qui rendent difficiles les échanges culturels (et autres) entre les Nations. Je m'étais donc décidé à louer une couchette dans le train Paris-Oslo. Je fus rapidement édifié. Si les simples voyageurs à titre individuel se voient infliger en tout trente contrôles (argent, bagages, passeports) sur cette ligne, que peut-il advenir à une tournée internationale voyageant avec son matériel par chemin de fer ou par car, à travers six pays d'Europe? En sommes-nous toujours à l'époque où, pour passer du grand-duché de Parme aux États pontificaux, en 1820, il fallait remplir des questionnaires, exhiber son passeport dûment visé par l'autorité compétente, répondre à la police, ouvrir son portefeuille à toute réquisition, et sans doute aussi montrer son certificat de baptême? Nous avons réussi à faire inclure les décors dans les accords culturels, mais il reste les costumes de style, les appareils électriques, tous les impedimenta indispensables à une représentation théâtrale. J'imagine les conversations, les discussions des chefs de tournées, aux différentes frontières, avec les douanes, avec les divers fonctionnaires, d'ailleurs généralement courtois, mais qui, néanmoins, veulent que tout, absolument tout soit en règle ; et il se peut que le sort de l'entreprise soit compromis, si, par exemple, il manque sur le triptyque le numéro de « la série du type » du moteur et les dimensions précises des pneus. J'ai pu vérifier, entre Paris et Oslo et retour, que nos buts dans ce domaine étaient encore loin d'être atteints...

I was anxious on this occasion to get an unbias ed view of the advantages and inconveniences of a railway journey between Paris and Oslo where our fourth Congress was to be held. The I. T. I. has been striving for a long time to get all sorts of barriers lifted which separate nations, and make cultural as well as other exchanges difficult and sometimes impossible. I determined therefore to reserve a berth on the Paris-Oslo train. I was soon enlightened. If a mere private passenger is subjected to thirty different controls of his money, passport and baggage, as he enters and leaves each of the countries he is obliged to traverse, what in Heaven's name becomes of an International Tour, travelling with all its properties by train or bus through six European countries? Are we still living in the 1820's when to pass from the Grand Duchy of Parma to the Papal States one had to answer a questionnaire, show passport and visa from the competent authority, satisfy the police, produce one's pocket book on request, and no doubt also one's birth certificate ? We have succeeded in getting stage sets included in the Cultural Agreements, but there remain period costumes, electrical apparatus and all the indispensable impedimenta of a theatrical performance. I can picture the arguments and discussions at every frontier between the managers and customs' authorities and various other officials, who are in general courteous, but who nevertheless insist that every single item should be precisely in order. Everything may be jeopardized because the serial number of an engine, for example, or the precise dimensions of the tyres do not figure on the triptych. I was able to verify, between Paris and Oslo, that in this domain we are still far from having achieved our ends.

Et cependant quel rendez-vous de bonnes volontés, de confiance et de travail fut le Congrès d'Oslo! Vingt-six nations, cent délégués. S. M. le roi de Norvège vint inaugurer en personne le Congrès et l'Exposition de décors contemporains, accompagné de LL. AA. RR. le prince héritier et la princesse Ragnhild. Le ministre des Affaires étrangères, le ministre de l'Éducation nationale, toutes les hautes autorités gouvernementales, parlementaires et municipales étaient là, ainsi que le Corps diplomatique au complet. Pour ce qui est de nos délégués, je citerai seulement trois cas, puisque, la place me manquant, je suis malheureusement obligé de ne pas les nommer tous : l'observateur du Japon, l'observateur de l'Indonésie, le délégué des Indes étaient venus spécialement d'Extrême-Orient. Que puis-je dire de plus pour montrer sans littérature l'empressement mis par les groupes théâtraux de pays lointains, de pays nouveaux à joindre notre organisation? Pourtant, si je n'ai pas la liberté, faute de place, de remercier tous les dévouements et tous les talents qui ont participé au IVe Congrès et ont concouru à son succès, si je ne puis que dire merci au Centre national norvégien, à son président, Axel-Otto Normann, au docteur Jaime Torres-Bodet, directeur général de l'U. N. E. S. C. O., à Jean Thomas, directeur des Activités culturelles de cette même grande organisation mondiale, qu'on me permette de saluer les Nations présentes à Oslo, présentes au Congrès, présentes au travail, et que je suis heureux de réunir ici, une nouvelle fois, les unes à côté des autres, pour leur adresser ce remerciement très ému : Allemagne, Australie, Belgique, Canada, Danemark, République dominicaine, Espagne, États-Unis d'Amérique, Finlande, France, Grèce, Indes, Indonésie, Irlande, Islande, Israël, Italie, Japon, Mexique, Norvège, Royaume-Uni, Suisse, Suède, Afrique du Sud, Uruguay, Yougoslavie...

Les peines et les soins qu'exige l'organisation d'un congrès de vingt-six pays, la multiplicité des détails devant être réglés d'avance font de cette tâche une des plus délicates qui soient ; grâce à Dieu, ainsi qu'à ceux qui s'aident eux-mêmes, ainsi qu'à ceux qui aident autrui et qui savent créer ainsi un esprit de solidarité, la vie de l'I. I. T., sa cohésion et son action se sont développées, se poursuivent à travers les cent actes divers du monde et des hommes, les paysages changeants, les fortunes qui nous font oublier les traverses passagères.

Nous voilà maintenant au nombre de trente pays. Je dis trente, car il vaut mieux être un tout petit peu en avance sur l'horaire qu'en retard. Bientôt nous composerons une grande famille de trente et un ou trente-deux garçons et filles (puisque, tout au moins en français, certains pays sont au féminin et certains autres au masculin; l'un d'eux est même, à la fois, au masculin et au pluriel, ce qui est après tout normal quand on songe qu'il s'agit des États-Unis d'Amérique). Les liens qui se sont créés entre les représentants de tous ces pays sont forts, leur élément essentiel est une évidente bonne volonté. On écoute son voisin, on discute avec lui, les opinions sont libres et souvent passionnées, ce qui est un excellent signe de jeunesse et de vitalité.

Yet what a gathering of goodwill, of work and confidence the Oslo Congress represented! I have no intention of intoning a hymn of victory, throbbing with conventional enthusiasm, but it is nevertheless perfectly true that the fourth I. T. I. Congress was a very great success indeed. Twenty-six nations and a hundred delegates attended it. His Majesty King Haakon opened both the Congress and Exhibition of Stage Design in person, accompanied by Their Royal Highnesses the Crown Prince and Princess Ragnhild. The Foreign Minister, the Minister for Education and all the senior government and municipal officials, as well as the entire Diplomatic Corps, were present at a series of extremely brilliant receptions. As regards our delegates, I will only mention three in particular, since lack of space precludes my mentioning them all. The observer from Japan, the observer from Indonesia and the delegate for India had come expressly from the Far East. How better can I describe the eagerness shown by the theatre groups of remote countries, and of new nations, to join our organization? If I cannot for lack of space thank all the talented and devoted people who took part in the Fourth Congress and contributed to its success, if I can only say thank you to the Norwegian Centre, to Dr. Jaime Torres-Bodet, Director General of Unesco, and to Jean Thomas, Director of its Cultural Relations, may I at least be permitted to salute the nations present at Oslo, present at the Congress, present at work. I am happy to unite them here once again and to set them side by side in this salutation : Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Great Britain, Greece, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Norway, San Domingo, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United States of America, Uruguay and Yugoslavia.

The care and trouble necessary to organize a congress of twenty-six nations, the multifarious details which must be attended to beforehand, make it the most delicate of tasks. Thanks be to God, and to those who help themselves, and also to those who help others by creating a solidarity which lingers in the memory, the life of the I. T. I., its cohesion and activity, has grown and is spreading through the diverse activities of the world and of men, through shifting landscapes and the vicissitudes of fortune.

We now count thirty member countries. I say thirty, for it is better to be a little ahead of the times than to lag behind them, and we shall shortly be a great family of thirty or thirty-one boys and girls (since in the French language at any rate some countries are masculine and others feminine, and one is even masculine plural, which is proper enough for the United States of America). Strong links have been forged between the representatives of all these countries, of which the essential element is, I think, goodwill. One listens to one's neighbour and argues with him. Opinions are free and often spirited, which is an excellent sign of youth and vitality.

ANDRÉ JOSSET

World Reviews

THE COCKTAIL PARTY

BY T. S. ELIOT

TOURS THE WORLD

EACH season two or three outstanding plays, after reaping the laurels of their native land, leap beyond its frontiers to flourish simultaneously in Helsinki and Milan, in Ankara and The Hague.

Our desire has been to follow one of these international successes on its circuit, to observe how far it changes its skin, to what extent its inner being is affected, and how it contrives to satisfy so many peoples of such diverse mentality.

We have started with *The Cocktail Party* simply because its world tour is more recent than that of *Ring Round the Moon* or *A Streetcar named Desire*, and also because it offers unusually wide possibilities of interpretation, and therefore more grounds for discussion, than for instance *The Lady's Not For Burning*.

Concerning *The Cocktail Party* therefore a number of exhaustive questionnaires have winged their way to England, America, Austria, Chili, Finland, Germany, Italy, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland, all countries in which the play has been performed. The men who adapted, produced and reviewed it have been good enough to send us their answers, and the present article owes to them such interest as it may have. Perhaps this symposium, by which distances are abolished, may furnish their reward.

A RÉSUMÉ BY ROBERT SPEAIGHT

Edward, a middle-ageing barrister, whose wife, Lavinia, has just left him, has for some time been in love with Celia: Peter, his friend, is also in love with Celia, who loves Edward: and Lavinia loves Peter. Around this central group are two friends, Julia, a grey-haired, good-natured Society chatterbox, with Alex, a bright young man-about-town, and a third figure, unidentified at first. This is a well-known psychiatrist, Sir Henry Harcourt-Reilly, whose purpose is to set these frustrated lives in order.

In the second act the scene shifts to Sir Henry's consulting-room. The psychiatrist, whom both Edward and Lavinia have been persuaded to see, neither of them knowing that he is their unidentified friend of the first act, confronts husband and wife with each other and sends them back, not to the ecstasies of romantic love, but to what is still "a good life." Celia comes in and we presently realize that here is a soul capable of subsisting on the glaciers of the spiritual life. And so Sir Henry sends her to the Special Sanatorium reserved for those who, by suffering greatly themselves, can teach others that without suffering there is neither salvation nor significance. As she goes, Sir Henry, with Alex and Julia, who have contrived all these consultations and listened to them from the next room, pour out three glasses of sherry, and, breaking for the first time into formal verse, implore protection on her journey.

In the third act Edward and Lavinia are giving another cocktail-party. Among the guests are Sir Henry and Julia; Alex, returned from Africa, and Peter, arrived from Hollywood. Alex explains to Peter that he will not see Celia—because Celia is dead. She had joined a nursing order of nuns and been crucified by natives in a village which Alex had visited. The play ends with Sir Henry explaining why Celia's death had been a happy one, and with him, Julia and Alex going off to another party.

AS INTERPRETED BY ITS ORIGINAL PRODUCER

E. MARTIN BROWNE

T. S. Eliot came into the theatre as a poet with a fully developed style, wishing to write poetic drama which a contemporary audience would accept. In each of his last two plays he has taken a step nearer to the naturalistic drama in which modern life has—in England at least—been commonly portrayed. In *Family Reunion* he moved from the twelfth-century scene of *Murder in the Cathedral* to a twentieth-century setting and characters. In *The Cocktail Party* he renounced almost completely the formalism still present in the earlier play, and used a setting and characters completely naturalistic, with a poetic diction so carefully derived from the characters'

natural speech that for much of the play the pulse of the verse-rhythm is the only thing that distinguishes it from prose. Eliot has said that he wants this rhythm to work imperceptibly on the audience, so that at the moments of heightened tension they shall think, "not that the actors are speaking verse, but that the characters of the play have been lifted up into poetry."

In trying, as producer, to realize his intentions, I accordingly avoided the creation of any patent symbolism. The setting was realistic, the smart dresses were chosen for mood and character as in a realistic play. The movement was motivated by physical and psychological rather than by symbolic urges. It was possible for many in the audience to enjoy the play simply as a revelation of individuals very like themselves, without being aware of any deeper significance.

The "libation" at the end of the scene in the consulting-room presented a delicate problem, since it must not be at variance with the style of the rest and yet must suggest the formality of a ritual. A treatment intensely serious yet light, as of a formula to which the users are habituated, seemed best to solve the problem. This is the most obvious example of the balance which the actors had to hold between realism and poetry—a task which at first frightened, but soon fascinated and satisfied them.

TRANSLATION AND ADAPTATION

1. *Has the transposition from one language to another forced you to any serious modifications:*

In Austria and Germany the translation used was by Madame Norah Wydenbruck, who declares: "The only changes I was forced to make concerned the metre. Eliot's new blank verse is based on three stressed syllables to a line with the cæsura falling at random. Eliot invented it to free himself from Shakespearian metre which dominates all English dramatic verse. In German I had to make four stressed syllabes in order to get away from Schiller's five foot iambics."

Italy.

The very position of the Italian theatre calls for a faithful translation and never for an adaptation.

France.

I have not attempted to alter the original text in any way. A work like *The Cocktail Party* presents itself in a conscious form of prosody artfully elaborated by the author, the smallest modification of which would be, in my view, a betrayal. (Henri Fluchère.)

2. *Have you tried to preserve the English atmosphere of the original?*

Madame Wydenbruck expresses an opinion common to all adapters of the play when she says: "I have not tried to convert Eliot's English society into a continental one for the circle in which the play moves, i.e. upper middle-class and gentry verging on Bohemia, is a more or less international one. The deeper meaning of the play is so universal that none of the audiences appeared to have any difficulty in accepting it."

INTERPRETATION AND PRODUCTION

What were the special difficulties of producing this play? Were you troubled by the mysterious character of the "guardians?"

Nearly all the producers were conscious of the obvious discord between the profound and poetic aspect of Eliot's thought and the worldly atmosphere of his setting. But they are far from having resolved the problem in a uniform manner.

"The strangeness of the guardians rests on the sound and rhythm of their speech. This led me to accentuate, for all the characters, the formal nature of the interpretation." (Roland Ricklinger, producer at Frankfurt.)

M. Sandro Malmquist, of the Swedish Riksteatern, on the contrary, wishing to give a "living, human and spontaneous performance of this speculative and intellectual play, produced it as a realist comedy, with a light and rapid rhythm, and without the least attempt to underline its mystic and symbolical value."

Agnes Mowinckel of Norway considered, for her part, that what appealed was not the form of the play so much as its theme, "that desolation of solitude so common in our time," and she strove to reconcile "the apparently incompatible elements: cocktail and libation, society life and martyrdom."

This was also the end sought by Mario Ferrero. "The difficulty so far as I was concerned was to create around the light and frivolous passages of the comedy such an atmosphere as would make its unforeseen twists comprehensible and acceptable, in finding and fixing the two extremely dissimilar rhythms which are the two rails along which the play runs. Here the presence of the guardians came to my assistance. Having found the rhythm, tone and mode by which to resolve them, the rhythm, tone and mode of the entire play became clear."

Helge Wahlgren the producer at Gothenburg, while also respecting "the mixture of sublime and everyday" tried to justify the decadent side of certain characters, and that of Julia in particular. "In order to conciliate her deep and visionary seriousness which is the essential thing about her with her social foibles, one must consider the latter as a form of self-irony. Julia deliberately affects inconsequence

This rationalization of the characters has not always been undertaken with such care. Thus in Germany Madame Wydenbruck observes that in certain cases the character of Julia "was transformed into a sinister personage who might have been painted by Toulouse-Lautrec."

Finally Berthold Viertel, producer of the Burgtheater in Vienna, who established his interpretation on a plane midway between mystery and comedy, resolved the inner contradiction of the characters by contrasting naturalness of gesture, attitude and movement with formality of speech

RECEPTION BY THE CRITICS AND THE PUBLIC

Madame Norah Wydenbruck was able to compare the reactions of the English public with those of European audiences. She writes: "The only important point of difference concerns the reconciliation of Edward and Lavinia. In England it was understood to be sincere; in Europe the tendency was rather to assume that they were making the best of a bad job."

Germany.

Both press and public were generally enthusiastic, everyone discovering in the play some separate form of nourishment.

The Fribourg producer says: "The success of the play is due to the acuteness of the metaphysical and psychological problems it sets forth, to the Catholic solution it gives to them (which won the clergy's commendation) and to the appeal of a novel form." The critic Johannes Jacobi, however, gave a very different explanation after the production by Gustav Gründgens in Düsseldorf. "While the central theme of *Murder in the Cathedral* was Sacrifice and that of *Family Reunion* Transgression, the main theme of *The Cocktail Party* is Love. The characters of this play come to the conclusion that they neither love nor are loved. The cure for this solitude is only to be found in a sense of community. Sartre pretended that Hell was represented by other people: Eliot retorts that Hell is in ourselves."

Austria.

Opposing trends of opinion concerning *The Cocktail Party* led to a regular pitched battle; left-wing newspapers attacked it furiously, while the Catholic press proclaimed it the greatest Christian work of our time. This controversy provoked analyses, which were often acute, of the play and its objectives. M. Siegfried Melchinger, after the performance of the Vienna Burgtheater wrote: "*The Cocktail Party* appears as a Protestant pendant to Claudel's *Soulier de Satin*. Both plays treat a fundamental problem. It has been said that true love, with its suffering and also with its strength, has no place in Eliot's work. "Does what we love live only in our imagination?" Celia asks herself. "Are we all really incapable of loving or being loved?"—and it is Eliot who replies that "everything, even love, is vanity." But the Austrian critic concludes: "Under cover of cocktails and psychological problems has not Eliot made himself the publicity agent of Christianity? Taken all round *The Cocktail Party* reminds me of a Salvation Army Meeting."

Italy.

The reaction of the critics, observes Mario Ferrero, was rather uncertain and perplexed. "Almost all of them sensed the importance of the work, but they denied it dramatic qualities and reproached the dialogue with being too long and difficult.

The public, misled by the title and the opening scene, took it for a light comedy. At the end of the first act they were disconcerted: during the second act interest rose to a climax at the dialogue between Celia and Dr. Reilly. By the third act success was won even though a certain number of spectators were too baffled to venture an opinion."

Norway.

The critics reacted in very different ways. Some of them were enthusiastic, others reacted violently against the "tendency" but none remained indifferent. (Agnes Mowinckel.)

Sweden.

The success of the play was demonstrated by the fact that three of Sweden's principal theatres produced it and took it on tour.

Sandro Malmquist, being only mildly interested in metaphysical discussion, centred his production as we have seen, on the Chamberlaynes' conjugal differences. This explains why "the public appeared chiefly interested in the problem of matrimonial relations; the scenes of comedy, during the squaring of accounts between husband and wife at Sir Henry's, were a special success. On the other hand, the moral and philosophic objectives and conclusions, especially the theme illustrated by Celia, seemed vague and were sceptically received. The rejoinder "We are all making the best of a desperate situation" met for the most part with breezy, humorous acquiescence.

Conversely, at Gothenburg, general opinion was reflected thus: "Eliot's play is not hard to understand; what matters is that, after the performance, Eliot's universe lives on in the mind of the spectator and grows by degrees deeper."

Switzerland.

The Swiss public had been prepared to receive this new message of Eliot by the performances we had given of *Murder in the Cathedral* and *Family Reunion*. Eliot constitutes for us a bulwark of the contemporary theatre. (Oscar Wälterlin, director of the Schauspielhaus at Zurich.)

U. S. A.

By a happy stroke of fortune our enquiry coincided with one being conducted in the United States by M. Allen Mandelbaum, under the auspices of A.N.T.A., concerning the audiences of *The Cocktail Party*. This enquiry, based on interviews with four hundred and fifty spectators, furnished material for a lengthy report of which these were the conclusions:

1. General response.

Slightly less than half the audience responded very favourably to the play, another twenty per cent liked it moderately, and about a third reacted unfavourably.

2. Understanding of the play.

Ten per cent of the audience was mystified, and at least another thirty per cent had difficulty in understanding. The chief stumbling blocks were: the shift in Julia's character, the libation scene and the conceptual (not the "poetic") quality of the language.

3. Involvement in Problems and Solutions.

Apart from the mystified ten per cent of the audience, twenty per cent enjoyed the humour, production and action but was not at all involved in "deeper levels of experience." The bulk of the audience however, seventy per cent, was agitated by, or involved in, the problems and answers of the play. This seventy per cent was made up of:

a. Twenty per cent who rejected both the problems and solutions as "unreal."

b. Thirty per cent who responded sympathetically to the problems but unsympathetically to the solutions.

c. Ten per cent (for the most part Catholics) who were sympathetically inclined to both problems and solutions.

d. Ten per cent who were interested by the problems and not antagonized by the solutions which they considered in the nature of illustrations.

JEAN FRANCIS.

A TOUR IN FIVE COUNTRIES

BY PETER POTTER

THIS is a report of a tour that I was fortunate enough to make in the Autumn of 1950 as a British Beneficiary of the I. T. I. Travelling Fellowship.

I left England on October 9th and my first visit was to Sweden; a small country, only seven million inhabitants, with a fine National Theatre tradition. There are excellent theatre buildings and first class companies at Gotenburg, Malmö, Upsala, Norkoping and Stockholm, as well as a National Touring Theatre which plays in more than three hundred centres and is financed both by the state and the various municipalities. A well educated audience, who know how to behave in the Theatre, but don't believe in curtain calls at the end of the performance. The standard of acting is high, particularly the women, and there are one or two really brilliant producers, notably Alf Sjöberg, and Olaf Molander at the Royal Dramatic Theatre, Stockholm. The plays are mainly imports from France, Great Britain and the U. S. A.—they seem to have few Swedish dramatists, and indeed during a fortnight's stay I only saw one Swedish play, which was not good. The best things I saw were:

Strauss's *Der Rosenkavalier* at the Stockholm opera where they have a splendid orchestra, in this instance under the direction of Knappertsbush who wrung the last ounce from the score, and T. S. Eliot's *The Cocktail Party* at the Royal Dramatic Theatre, Stockholm. A very vivid and imaginative production by Molander with sets ideally suspended between realism and symbolism, and excellent performances, particularly the Celia of Anita Björk.

The best individual performance I saw in Sweden, Inga Tidblad in Colette's *Chéri*. This is one of the most delicious and most moving performances I have ever seen, though the actress was really miscast in the play—she has grace, wit, charm, beauty and a haunting dramatic and tragic power. The production, while being adequate, was a bit sketchy.

Clérambard by Marcel Aymé at the Stadteater, Malmö. A delightful production of this fantastic comedy which compared very favourably with the production I saw later in Paris. It was performed in the Little Theatre at Malmö, which has a good intimate atmosphere in contrast to its big brother, which in spite of all the ballyhoo is, in my opinion, fit only for the staging of Mammoth Ice Shows.

From Sweden I travelled to Denmark; an even smaller country with only four million inhabitants, which manages to run a real National Repertory Theatre with two stages, which houses Opera, Ballet and Dramatic companies and schools in all three branches. During the ten days I was in Copenhagen I was to see under one roof Gounod's *Faust*, a complete Ballet programme, *Cæsar and Cleopatra*, *The Miser*, Anouilh's *Ardèle*, *Death of a Salesman*, and a new Danish play. The standard of acting was high, of production mediocre, except for *The Death of a Salesman*, which was excellent, simple and very moving. The whole scheme is a triumph of organization.

The Commercial Theatre has a bit of a struggle in Denmark, but I did see a beautifully nostalgic performance of *L'Invitation au Château* done in Messel's *Ring round the Moon* set; it was not as brilliant nor as polished as the London production but I suspect, far closer to Anouilh. Perhaps the best commercial performance I saw was Erling Shroeder's production in period costume of *Fallen Angels*. This was very gay and had two superb performances by Marguerite Viby and Clara Osto; this was real period playing, the whole atmosphere of the midtwenties being perfectly caught.

My next visit was to the Ruhr district of Germany and here I stayed in Dusseldorf and visited theatres in Essen, Wuppertal, Duisburg, Cologne and Bonn. They have no buildings, and it was indeed inspiring to see how they have overcome disadvantages and are playing in drill halls, converted canteens, and even in rooms. The standard of acting and of presentation is remarkably high.

During the eight days I was in Germany I only went into one theatre, the Opera House in Düsseldorf. Here I saw a performance of Mozart's *Marriage of Figaro*, well sung and well acted by a team of individualists. I also saw a

COCKTAIL-PARTY

Act II : The Psychiatrist confronts husband and wife. *Left and right :* Two interpretations of this same scene.

Spiritual tendency.
Sweden : Gothenburg Theatre. Producer Helge Wahlgren.

Tendance à la spiritualité.
Suède : Théâtre de Göteborg. Metteur en scène : Helge Wahlgren.

★

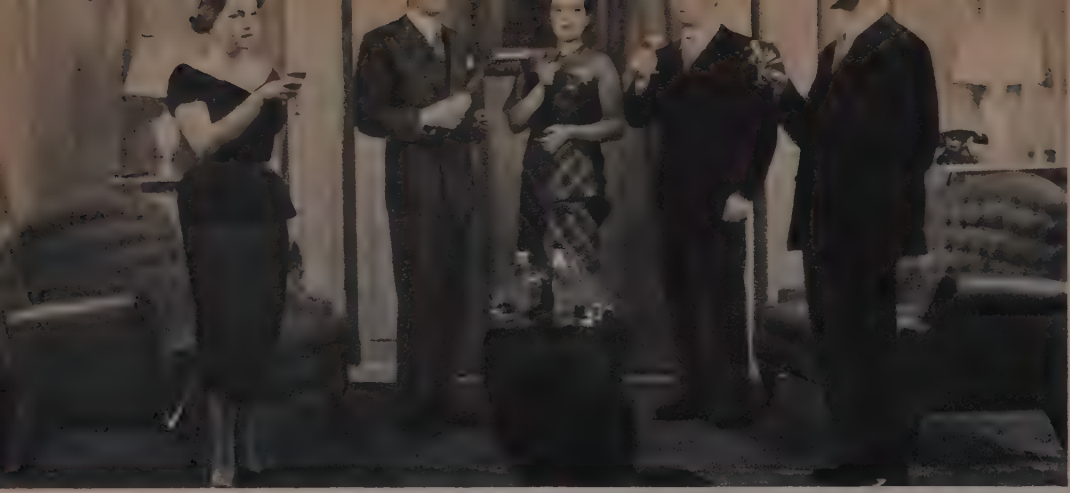
Act II :
The Psychiatrist hears Celia's confession.
Germany : Municipal Theatre, Düsseldorf. Producer Gustaf Gründgens.
(Photograph by Strelow.)

Acte II : Le psychiatre confesse Célia.
Allemagne : Théâtre municipal de Düsseldorf. Metteur en scène : Gustaf Gründgens.
(Photo Strelow.)

Acte II : le psychiatre confronte les époux.
A gauche et à droite : Deux interprétations de cette même scène.

Comic interpretation. *Sweden : Riksteatern. Producer Sandro Malmquist.*
(Photograph by Sall Tedts.)

Interprétation franchement comique. *Suède : Riksteatern. Metteur en scène : Sandro Malmquist.* (Photo Sall Tedts.)



Act III : Alex announces the death of Celia.

Acte III : Alex annonce la mort de Célia.

★

Chilian production : Atelier Theatre of Santiago. Producer Miguel Frank.

Interprétation chilienne : Théâtre de l'Atelier de Santiago du Chili. Metteur en scène : Miguel Frank.

Austrian production : Burgtheater of Vienna. Producer Berthold Viertel.

(Photograph by Völkel.)

Interprétation autrichienne : Burgtheater de Vienne. Metteur en scène : Berthold Viertel.

(Photo Völkel.)

★

And Sir Henry concludes that Celia's end is happy.

English production : Globe Theatre, London. Producer E. Martin Browne.

Et Sir Henry conclut que cette fin est heureuse.

Interprétation britannique : Théâtre du Globe, Londres. Metteur en scène : E. Martin Browne.

AUTRICHE
AUSTRIA

Paula Wessely dans Barbara Blomberg, *de Carl Zuckmayer. Mise en scène de Rudolf Steinbock. Décor du professeur Niedermoser. Costumes de Reihs-Gromes. Theater « in der Josefstadt », Vienne, 1949.*

(Photo Kössler.)

Paula Wessely in Barbara Blomberg, *by Carl Zuckmayer. Produced by Rudolf Steinbock. Décor by Professor Niedermoser. Costumes by Reihs-Gromes. Theater in der Josefstadt, Vienna, 1949.*

(Photograph by Kössler.)

★

A gauche :

Paula Wessely et Attila Hörbiger dans la Dame de la mer, *d'Henrik Ibsen. Mise en scène d'Ernst Ginsberg. Décor de Théo Otto. Costumes de Reihs-Gromes. Theater « in der Josefstadt », Vienne, 1949.*

(Photo Bruno Völkel.)

Above :

Paula Wessely and Attila Hörbiger in The Lady from the Sea, *by Henrik Ibsen. Produced by Ernst Ginsberg. Décor by Theo Otto. Costumes by Reihs-Gromes. Theater in der Josefstadt, Vienna, 1949.*

(Photograph by Bruno Völkel.)

★

Le Don d'Adèle, *by Pierre Barillet and Jean Pierre Grédy. Produced by Peter Preses. Décor by Karl Dworsky. Theater in der Josefstadt, Vienna, 1950.*

(Photograph by Michael Kössler.)

Le Don d'Adèle, *de Pierre Barillet et Jean-Pierre Grédy. Mise en scène de Peter Preses. Décor de Karl Dworsky. Theater « in der Josefstadt », Vienne, 1950.*

(Photo Michael Kössler.)

BELGIQUE

La Vie Parisienne, *de Meilhac et Halévy. Musi d'Offenbach. Mise en scène de Jacques Huisman et Raym Gérôme. Décors et costumes de Denis Martin. Thé National français, Bruxelles, 1951.*

(Photo Deflandre.)

La Vie Parisienne, *by Meilhac and Halévy. M by Offenbach. Produced by Jacques Huisman Raymond Gérôme. Décor and costumes by Denis Mar National French-speaking Theatre, Brussels, 195*

(Photograph by Deflandre.)

★

Meurtre dans la cathédrale, *de T. S. Eliot. M en scène de Rik Jacobs. Reizend Volkstheater, 1949.*

Murder in the Cathedral, *by T. S. Eliot. Prod by Rik Jacobs. Reizend Volkstheater, 1949*

Peau d'Ours, *de Paul Willems. Mise en scène de Jacques Huisman. Décor et costumes de Denis Martin. Théâtre National français, Bruxelles, 1951.*

(Photo Deflandre.)

Peau d'Ours, *by Paul Willems. Produced by Jacques Huisman. Décor and costumes by Denis Martin. National French-speaking Theatre, Brussels, 1951.*

(Photograph by Deflandre.)

★

En bas, à gauche :

Een Kerstmirakel, *d'Eugène Winters. Théâtre National flamand, 1950.*

(Photo Cauwenbergh.)

Below left :

En Kerstmirakel, *by Eugène Winters. National Flemish-speaking Theatre, 1950.*

(Photograph by Cauwenbergh.)

★

En bas, à droite :

Les Choephores, *d'Eschyle. Traduction de Paul Claudel.* Au centre, *André Berger (metteur en scène, interprète d'Oreste) et Denyse Berger (Electre). Rideau de Bruxelles, 1950.*

(Photo Bajowitsch.)

Below, right :

The Choephori, *by Æschylus, translated by Paul Claudel.* In the centre, *André Berger (Producer, playing the part of Orestes) and Denyse Berger (Electre). Rideau de Bruxelles, 1950.*

(Photograph by Bajowitsch.)

BELGIUM

CHILE
CHILI

★

Twelfth Night, *by Shakespeare. Produced by Frederick Farley and Harold Baigent. Décor by Harold Baigent. Community Arts Service Theatre, New Zealand, 1950. (This production had to be given in very primitive buildings; the décor was therefore most simplified.)*

La Nuit des rois, *de William Shakespeare. Mise en scène de Frederick Farley et Harold Baigent. Décor par Harold Baigent. Community Arts Service Theatre, New Zealand, 1950. (Ce spectacle devait être présenté dans les locaux les plus rudimentaires; le décor est donc simplifié au maximum.)*

★

★

The Rivals, *by Sheridan. Produced by Frederick Farley. Décor by Tom Taylor. A painted back-drop was used instead of a full set. Canterbury Repertory Theater, Christchurch, New Zealand, 1950.*

Les Rivaux, *de Sheridan. Mise en scène de Frederick Farley. Décor de Tom Taylor. Canterbury Repertory Theatre Christchurch, New Zealand, 1950. (Un rideau peint fait office de décor).*

★

NEW ZEALAND
NOUVELLE-ZÉLANDE

★

Lydia Proschinicka in The Eagle has Two Heads, *by Jean Cocteau. Produced by Etienne Frois. Santiago, Chili, 1951.*

(Photograph Combeau.)

Lydia Proschinicka dans l'Aigle à Deux Têtes, *de Jean Cocteau. Mise en scène d'Etienne Frois. Santiago du Chili, 1951.*

(Photo Combeau.)

★

GRÈCE
GREECE

★

Œdipe Roi, *de Sophocle. Mise en scène de Al. Minotis. Décor de C. Clonis. Costumes de A. Phocas. Théâtre antique de Delphes, 1951. Œdipe est joué par Al. Minotis et Jocaste par Katina Paxinou.*

Œdipus Rex, *by Sophocles. Produced by Al. Minotis. Décor by C. Clonis. Costumes by A. Phocas. Ancient Theatre of Delphi, 1951. Œdipus is played by Al. Minotis and Jocasta by Katina Paxinou.*

★

Œdipe Roi, *de Sophocle. Mise en scène de Al. Minotis. Décor de C. Clonis. Costumes de A. Phocas. Théâtre antique de Delphes, 1951. Œdipe est joué par Al. Minotis et Jocaste par Katina Paxinou.*

Œdipus Rex, *by Sophocles. Produced by Al. Minotis. Décor by C. Clonis. Costumes by A. Phocas. Ancient Theatre of Delphi, 1951. Œdipus is played by Al. Minotis and Jocasta by Katina Paxinou.*

★

★

Dans l'enceinte du fameux théâtre d'Epidaure se sont dansés les Rythmes Archaïques, *ballet de la Compagnie Koula Pratsika, 1951.*

Archaic Rhythms, *ballet by the Koula Pratsika Company, 1951, given in the famous Theatre of Epidaurus.*

★

U. R. S. S. U. S. S. R.

★

Des acteurs ouzbeks interprètent le spectacle Khamza, *de Yachen et Oumari, au Théâtre dramatique de Tachkent.*

(Phot. Kropivnitski et Porter.)

Uzbekian actors interpreting the play Khamsa, *by Yachen and Oumari, at the Theatre of Tashkent.*

(Photograph by Kropivnitski and Porter.)

really exciting performance of *The Trial* by Kafka with Gustaf Gründgens. He is supposed to be one of the best German actors and certainly he was tremendously good in this. The production was very well staged and even the smallest part played with fervour. At Essen I saw a production of Kleist's translation of Molière's *Amphitryon* on a tiny stage which had been extended by adding a large apron and painting the proscenium arch as part of the whole set. It was a fine example of turning disadvantages into assets. At Cologne I sat for over five hours on a hard wooden bench in the University Lecture Hall to see a really exciting performance of *Die Meistersinger*. It really was a very strange experience, most uncomfortable but sung with such gusto that one forgot the discomfort.

In France my first stop was in Paris, and I am afraid I must say quite honestly that after what I had seen in the smaller countries, it was disappointing. Perhaps the most disappointing thing was the standard of presentation and décor. There are plenty of exciting star actors but the standard of supporting players didn't seem to be good enough. The first production I saw was Louis Jouvet's *Tartuffe* which did not seem to me as good as the production by the Bristol Old Vic which I had seen in London only a few months previously. Jouvet himself is a tremendous personality and I admired also the inventive performance of Pierre Renoir. I think I was unlucky in the productions I saw at the Comédie-Française, a sumptuously dressed production of *A Winter's Tale* which I found dull and *L'Otage* by Paul Claudel which was a very interesting play but seemed more suitable for the study than for the theatre. Undoubtedly the most exciting things to be seen in Paris are at the Marigny Theatre. The minute you walk into the Theatre you are in the right atmosphere. I was lucky enough to see *La Répétition* by Anouilh, a very good play, moving, amusing and written with real style. It was played with style too from the rise of the curtain on a bare stage and the first entrance of Madeleine Renaud. Barrault himself is a wonderful actor—not perhaps ideally cast here but having real magnetism, spirit, passion and style. He was kind enough to allow me to attend a rehearsal of his new production *Molatesta*, which looked like being exciting, though again he did not seem to be well suited by the part.

The two other highlights of my stay in Paris were a one man show by Maurice Chevalier, a quite astonishing performance for a man of his age and sheer delight from beginning to end, and a very fine production of a new play by Montherlant called *Celles qu'on prend dans ses bras*. This was quite beautifully acted by a cast of five people in one of the only really good sets that I saw in Paris. It was by Wakhevitch who was responsible for the décor for the London production of *Adventure Story*. My main impression in Paris was that they have the plays—there seem to me six or seven writers of absolutely outstanding quality—but their standards of production and small part playing fall short.

From Paris I went to spend a week with one of the young companies subsidized by the State, taking plays to the theatre starved towns in the Loire district. There are four such companies and they seem to be the only permanent Companies operating in the Provinces.

The Company I visited, La Comédie de Saint Étienne, was started about five years ago by Jean Dasté, son-in-law of the late Jacques Copeau. Here is a wonderful atmosphere—great seriousness about the work, artistic integrity, the group ideal and thank God, a sense of humour. The company work in an attic at the top of the École des Mines, do only about four or five productions a year and never rehearse and play at the same time. They play each production for about a month mainly one night stands, going as far south as Marseille and as far East as Annecy. Rehearsals take three or four weeks. The standard of the work is very high, and they have evolved a highly individual style, using much music and near-dance movement in their work.

Dasté himself is a wonderful man, strict but very human, with the capacity for inspiring the devotion of his Company. I spent a week here and found such an atmosphere of friendliness and hard work as can only exist in very few theatres in the world.

My last visit was to Zurich, where I found a city of four hundred thousand inhabitants, a straight theatre and an opera which may well be the most adventurous in Europe. The Schauspielhaus is a Theatre of great charm, but cramped conditions, backstage. In spite, or perhaps because of the limitations, the settings are fine and very imaginative. I saw a splendid performance of Schiller's *Kabale und Liebe*—the real thing this—a delightful comedy performance by Kate Gold in Sardou's *Cyprienne*, the one really warm and feminine performance I saw by a German actress, and a very passable *Merchant of Venice*.

The Opera was really splendid. Unfortunately I had only time to see two performances—a very moving *Porgy and Bess*, one of the most popular works in their repertoire, and a truly lovely production of Richard Strauss's *Arabella*. This latter ranks as one of the best opera performances I have ever seen anywhere, and Lisa Della Casa in the lead has the perfect voice for Strauss. I think it is interesting that the repertoire at this time included only one opera which is in most opera repertoires, *The Magic Flute*, and the remaining works were *Let's make an Opera* by Britten, *Harry Janos* by Kodaly and Gian-Carlo Menotti's *The Consul*. An impressive list, reflecting great credit on the management and public alike.

My main impressions from the tour are these. In all five countries there are real National or State Theatres adequately subsidized. The Cities take part in these subsidies and indeed in Germany bear the whole cost. France is the country that seems to be producing the writers; most other European countries depend on French authors to supply their plays; what other country in the world can boast of so many first rate dramatists—Anouilh, Montherlant, Sartre, Salacrou, Camus, Mauriac, Aymé, Roussin?

The National Theatres in Europe do present a consistently high standard of play, and they do offer to their artists some measure of security in a profession which is all too precarious.

PETER POTTER

A Young British Stage Director, beneficiary of an I. I. T. Travelling Fellowship.

AUSTRIA

THE Director of the Burgtheater, Josef Gielen put on *Gesang im Feuerofen* (The Song in the Furnace), by Carl Zuckmayer, the subject of which is a tragic episode of the French Resistance. I liked the production enormously (with Caspar Neher's décors), and also that of Bernard Shaw's *Cæsar and Cleopatra,* with the supreme artist Werner Krauss in the part of Cæsar.

We owe to the Akademietheater (also under the direction of Josef Gielen) and to the producer Berthold Viertel, two magnificent performances: T. S. Eliot's *Cocktail Party* and *A Streetcar Named Desire* by Tennessee Williams; both productions were superior to those given in London and New York according to people who saw them all. Käthe Dorsch excelled in a revival of Colette's *Chéri*, and the whole company shone in that of Johann Nestroy's satire, *Zù ebener Erde und im ersten Stock* (On the Ground and First Floor) which is played, as the title indicates, simultaneously on two levels. The rather savage social criticism of the old theatrical pessimist was considerably softened by the highly coloured and accidented production of Oskar Fritz Schuh.

I was less convinced of the necessity of producing Richard Billinger's *Die Traube in der Kelter* (The Grapes in the Press). Was it because the author was Austrian? But there are others more deserving of a helping hand! Billinger was successful in the past with scenes which had a certain peasant poetry. But this time he has bogged himself in an absurd mediæval Austria and a language of intolerable artificiality. And the actors piled it on.

At the Josefstadt there was a first production of *Bertha Suttner*, a stereotyped portrait of the well known pacifist, by a young Viennese, Herbert Ertl, *Samba* by Ulrich Becher, an Austrian writer who has succeeded in evoking the atmosphere of the tropics, and a rather superfluous revival of Hermann Bahr's *Wienerinnen* (Women of Vienna).

The Volkstheater produced another play by Zuckmayer entitled *Katharina Knie* in which Inge Konradi gave a consummate performance of a circus artist (She made an equally perfect Saint Joan). But their most important production was Camus' *Les Justes*, directed by Gustav Manker. Their programme was completed by the comedy *Der grosse Gast* (The Illustrious Guest) by Hans Weigel (writing under the pseudonym of Peter Hansen) which wittily and bitingly exposes the too-human side of a great pianist, and gives rise to a series of extremely pertinent remarks on the grandeurs and miseries of art. It was an enormous success for both author and actors, especially for Carl Bosse in the part of the pianist. The production was by Glücksmann.

In conclusion, two pocket theatres deserve mention; the tiny hall of the Konzerthaus in which Sartre's *No Exit* was played, and the Courage Theatre, which for once belied its name by giving Cocteau's *Parents Terribles.* The singularly gifted young actress Elisabeth Stemberger triumphed in both these plays.

HANNS WINTER.

★ ★

BELGIUM

THE season of 1950-1951 has been marked by two encouraging factors. In the first place the outstanding number of new Belgian plays—twelve on the French-speaking side alone—and in the second the publication of the Minister of Education's statute covering forms of State assistance to the theatre. From the broad outlines of this plan it emerges that the Minister, M. Harmel, has aimed at regrouping and redistributing subsidies, at increasing the social and educative function of the theatre and at decentralizing its activities.

The total of State assistance for 1951 amounts to 17 million francs (about 340,000 dollars),—a modest sum if one considers that it has in justice to be divided between the French and Flemish-speaking theatres. The major portion of these 17 million (93 %) is devoted to regular subsidies which fall under three headings: 1) A mission of "Education Nationale" (spread of dramatic art among all sections of the population) entrusted for a term of six years, to the Théâtre National de Belgique on the one hand, and the National Vlaams Toneel van Belgie on the other. 2) A mission of "Théâtre Littéraire" (maintenance of the classical repertory) entrusted for a term of three years to the Théâtre Royal du Parc and the Koninklijke Nederlandse Schouwburg. 3) A mission of "Théâtre Nouveau" (production of the more hazardous contemporary plays) entrusted for three years to the Rideau de Bruxelles and the Koninklijke Vlaamse Schouwburg.

The State leaves the approved companies the widest artistic autonomy. On the other hand it requires of them, apart from a strict financial account, a minimum number of annual performances, a high degree of decentralization, the organization of matinées for schools and of tours to entertain the troups, and a limitation in the employment of foreign actors or foreign productions.

Apart from the theatres subsidized in this way, State concern for the theatre is manifested in the form of "one production's subsidies" (which make it possible to produce unusually expensive plays) and of "encouragements to the

Belgian Theatre:" aids to the Belgian playwrights, to the young Belgian companies, to the provincial and open air theatres.

The merits of this plan will be proved in operation. Its efficacity plainly depends a great deal on the funds allotted to it, and these should be revised without delay in order to offset the ever increasing cost of living. Nevertheless in spirit it strikes a judicious balance between momentary stabilization of the subsidized companies, which makes it possible for them to work seriously, and relative instability, which admits competition, gives everyone a chance and prevents the best provided from going to sleep.

FRENCH-SPEAKING THEATRE

The mission of "education" was attributed to the National Theatre (director Jacques Huisman) as a matter of course. Since its creation six years ago the National Theatre has not ceased from extending its tours and increasing its public. The figures speak for themselves. At its inception the National Theatre was proud of reaching 20,000 spectators in Brussels and 32,000 in the provinces: in the course of the last year it has been able to boast 87,000 spectators in Brussels (of which 8,500 are subscribers) and 120,000 in the provinces (with 25,000 subscribers). This represents a success of which we may be justly proud, even according to foreign standards.

The National Theatre has access to two theatres in Brussels. One of which has been exclusively devoted this season to productions by Belgian authors: Georges Sion's *Princesse de Chine*, Claude Spaak's *Rossignols de Castille*, Paul Willems' *Peau d'Ours* and Raymond Gérôme's *Mauve et le Jitterburg*, all of which have been reviewed in the Bulletin of World Premières.

The greatest success of the second National Theatre stage was unquestionably Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*, but other excellent performances were *Richard III* and *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*.

The attribution of the "new theatre" mission to the Rideau de Bruxelles (director Claude Étienne) was also an obvious choice. For the last ten years this company has presented to the Belgian public the most important plays from abroad as well as several by Belgian authors. This season again we have enjoyed Johnston's *The Moon in the Yellow River*, Saroyan's *The Time of our Lives*, which was however coldly received, and revivals of plays by Salacrou, Anouilh, Crommelynck, a performance of Josset's *Elizabeth, la Femme sans Homme*, and a first production of *Le Voyageur de Forceloup* by the Belgian dramatist, Georges Sion.

The Théâtre du Parc (director Oscar Lejeune) was entrusted with the mission of the "literary theatre," for traditionally it is the leading comedy stage of the kingdom. This theatre also enjoys an increasingly large audience (160,000 with 11,000 subscribers), which it has recently entertained chiefly with foreign companies, many of them outstanding: the Comédie-Française, the Hébertot Company, etc. On the other hand the Parc company, headed by the French actor Marcel Raine, went to Paris to produce *Corps et Ames*, an adaptation of the novel by Maxence van der Meersch. By giving preference to foreign companies the Parc Theatre have practically adopted the old policy of the Théâtre des Galeries who have always pursued it profitably and without any subsidy. This year they imported, amongst other entertainments, Jean-Louis Barrault's company in Anouilh's *La Répétition* and produced a Belgian play by Aimé Declercq.

JEAN FRANCIS.

FLEMISH-SPEAKING THEATRE

As the season of 1951-1952 opens, the burning problem of cooperation between our three great cities Antwerp, Brussels and Ghent is still only partially resolved. The Harmel plan cannot cut across municipal autonomy, and grave difficulties continue to subsist.

The chief events of the past season took place at the National Vlaams Toneel van Belgie which is based in Antwerp. Its four companies totalled between them more than 850 performances before 521,000 spectators. Specially remarkable was the production of *Trijntje Cornelis*, a picturesque work of the 17th century, which portrays the conflict between Dutch and Flemish peoples, with a broad truculence which banished it from the stage for three centuries. The second event was the revival, twenty years after its first production, of Ghelderode's *Barabbas*. The French press on discovering *Les Fastes d'Enfer* was given to remarking that Ghelderode had remained unknown in his own country. Let us confine ourselves to recalling that he has always been one of the favourite authors of the Flemish theatre, particularly during the great period of expressionism, and that even *Barabbas* appeared in Flemish before it was published in French.

At the same theatre several new plays by national authors were produced; Eugène Winters' *Kerstmirakel*, *De Stijfkop* by the lamented Paul de Mont, Lode Cantens' *Storm in het Paradijs*, Louis Bruylant's *Eva Brandes*, all of which works show sufficient creative vigour if no great dramatic ambition.

Among the plays in translation let us cite Anouilh's *Le Bal des Voleurs*, *Folies Bergère* and *Chant XXV* by two of our compatriots, Charles Bertin and Charles Cordier. In the "Tuesday Cycle" one evening was devoted to satire (R. Avermaete, Courteline, Tchekov), one to the American theatre (G. Kaufman, Ph. Moeller, W. Saroyan), one to the Soviet theatre (A. Gladkov, P. Yaltchev, A. Afinogenev) and one to Jean Giraudoux.

Mention must also be made of the Reizend Volkstheater's further tour in Dutch Brabant and a new "summer season" given by the Flemish theatre in Central Africa, where it repeated successes previously obtained in 1950 in the Belgian Congo and Union of South Africa.

JAN GROOTAERS.

CHILI

Since October 1950 the Experimental Theatre of Chili University has given *Volpone*, in the adaptation of Romains and Zweig, Ugo Betti's play *Corruption in the Law Courts*, and Sherwood's *Petrified Forest*. It has also distinguished itself by the first production of a Chilean play by Enrique Bunster, *The Island of Pirates*, inspired by a legend of the Pacific. The story concerns an English naturalist in search of a rare butterfly. The peaceable islanders imagine that he is looking for treasure. Spurred by greed they fall to theft and murder, so that a thousand catastrophies overtake the village. The play has dynamism as well as moral purpose, and recalls some of the best action films.

The Ensayo Theatre of the Catholic University has produced Maxwell Anderson's *Joan of Lorraine*, *The Madwoman of Chaillot* (the success of which called for a revival) and Jean Anouilh's *Ring round the Moon*, besides giving a first performance to a Chilean play, *El Cid*, by Camilo Perez de Arce. This proud piece, which has great dignity, sets forth the dissemblance between the hero as he really is and as legend creates him. Before becoming the legendary hero, "the male of a single female" as the Spanish romancero phrases it, was not the Cid subject like other leaders to feminine seduction? Such is the epic rather than dramatic problem to which the author invites our consideration.

The Atelier Theatre presented Eliot's *Cocktail Party*, *Le Bel Indifférent*, *La Voix Humaine* and *Le Fantôme de Marseille* by Jean Cocteau, *Le Don d'Adèle* by Barillet et Grédy, *Condemned Property* by T. Williams (which was played together with Pablo Neruda's poem *Pelléas and Mélisande*) and last of all an Austrian musical comedy *Charles II and Anne of Austria* by Manfried Roessner.

Under the auspices of the Franco-Chilean Institute, M. Etienne Frois produced Cocteau's *L'Aigle à deux têtes*, in Spanish, with signal success.

The Alejandro Flores Company played *Dear Thief* by the Hungarian dramatist Laszlo, *The Boat without a Fisherman* by Alejandro Cassona and *A Traveller leaves at Dawn* by our fellow countryman Roberto Sarah, a work of undoubted technical interest.

A new company, the Intimate Players have established themselves in a pocket theatre, the Little Rex. They opened with Jacques Deval's *La Femme de ta Jeunesse*.

To celebrate its tenth anniversary the Experimental Theatre organized the first Chilean Theatre Festival, with the co-operation of several national companies. Within the framework of these festivities the Ensayo Theatre of the Catholic University revived *El Cid* by Camilo Perez de Arce, the Flores Company produced Sarah's *A Traveller leaves at Dawn*, while the Experimental itself revived *Like at Santiago*, a Chilean classic of the last century by Daniel Barros Grez. Exhibitions (of photographs, maquettes, dresses and décors), publications, conferences and banquets completed the programme of celebrations, which lasted from June 18th to 25th and met on all sides with a very favourable reception.

Mario Naudon de la Sotta.

FRANCE

It is not easy to find ones way about recent French theatrical production. Long term successes have grown rare and, for a variety of reasons, theatre business has been tricky.

Le Diable et le Bon Dieu by Jean-Paul Sartre, produced by Louis Jouvet at the Théâtre Antoine, is both a play and a piece of artillery—an engine of war. God, the Devil, and the Enemy are thrown into one by their common annihilation at the end: man remains alone upon earth, free to organize his own destiny.

The man in question, Gœtz, an illegitimate German war chief at the opening of the XVI century, in the early days of Lutheran reform and of the Peasant Revolt, plays with good and evil with the precision of an automaton whose complex mechanism has been meticulously regulated by the author. Every possible attitude to the problem of good and evil, in its relation to the existence of God and the Devil, receives illustration. Naturally the theatrical medium requires a simplified design: the composition of the tableaux even has something of the quality of an Epinal lithograph. They constitute a series of slides like at school, to animate the demonstrations of the master, Jean-Paul Sartre. For the play has the properties of a demonstration and the characters are all kept in step.

It is full of ability. The action is engaging and counteracts the spectators' too great absorption in the debate. Some people enthusiastically admire the breadth and precision of workmanship. Others deplore the schematic action which progressively robs the characters of life and substance. They are particularly taken aback by the apparent naïveté of the master mind who seems anxious to convince his audience by accumulating elementary arguments. (Despite the length of the work, they remain elementary and are only necessary in order to omit no aspect of the question.)

Pierre Brasseur, as Gœtz, and Jean Vilar achieved feats of comedy which will remain as high watermarks of their career.

Colombe by Jean Anouilh at the Atelier, has likewise provoked contradictory criticism. This comedy of love in the world of the theatre (the story of Sarah Bernhardt obviously inspired the character of Madame Alexandre, the ageing "sacred monster") enchanted the majority of people, who enjoyed the varied register of the dialogue and the long scenes which they considered as the fine flowering of a dramatist. For others, on the contrary, the exaggerations of the theatre world, though handled with virtuosity, ended by detracting from the real subject, the spoiled love

of Julien and Colombe. In their view the author had yielded to facility.

Danièle Delorme, Yves Robert and Marie Ventura are the unerring, sensitive and picturesque interpreters of this play, which has admirable décors by André Barsacq.

This winter French authors fêted Henri Bernstein's half century of dramatic production.

For his return to the Comédie-Française, Fernand Ledoux chose to endow *Tartufe* with a new lustre, simply by making each actor play up to the limits of his capacity, and by making the most of the comic indications of the text.

At the Salle Luxembourg, *Le Dindon* by Georges Feydeau, well served by the witty and distinguished build-up of each character and by the pace which Jean Meyer imposed as producer, is one of the most astounding successes of the season.

Jean Vilar's production of *Œdipe* at the Marigny Theatre, with the Madeleine Renaud-Jean Louis Barrault Company and décors by Leon Gischia, set off both the grandeur and the humour of André Gide's version.

The following foreign plays are deserving of mentions: Pirandello's *Right you are! If you think you are* at the Comédie-Française, Tchekhov's *Uncle Vanya* at the Studio des Champs Elysées, V. Vishnevski's *Optimistic Tragedy* at the Théâtre Verlaine (U.S.S.R.), B. Veiller's *Trial of Mary Dugan* at the Sarah Bernhardt, J. Logan's *Mister Roberts* at the Variétés, T. Job's *Uncle Harry* at the Antoine, also *The Heiress* by R. and A. Gœtz at the Mathurins (U.S.A.), Terence Rattigan's *Love in Idleness* (England), J. de Hartog's *Death of a Rat* at the Gramont (Holland) and Ghelderode's *Magie Rouge* at the Œuvre (Belgium).

PAUL LOUIS MIGNON.

OPERA IN FRANCE

FOR *Bolivar*, Darius Milhaud, the justly celebrated composer, produced a score which was a mixture of grandiloquence and carelessness. Alas, this revolutionary of musical writing here figures as a belated disciple of operatic form, to the point that his "epic" resembles a replica of some old piece in the manner of Meyerbeer.

Very different was the advent of *Jeanne au Bûcher* by Claudel and Honegger, also presented at the Opéra. The experiment of producing this work upon the stage was decisive, and though some purists continue to prefer it in its primitive form of oratorio, the public's enthusiastic reception fully justified the magnificence with which it had been produced. (Jan Doat's production: sets and costumes by Yves Bonnat.)

Three of the large provincial theatres have not feared to announce new "creations." At Bordeaux, Jean Françaix's *La Main de Gloire*, an uneven work of which the second part is best; at Mulhouse *Le Rire de Nils Halerius* by Marcel Landowski, who has built, upon a philosophic theme, a work the musical qualities of which compel esteem—and lastly at Toulouse, Maurice Delannoy's *Abraham*, an experiment in choreographic drama which excited the liveliest interest. (Production by Sarrazin, choreography by Charrat.)

Bondeville's *Madame Bovary* at the Opéra-Comique is unquestionably a well made piece, designed on elegant and distinguished lines. It steers clear of all innovations in form or audacities of composition and is consequently warmly applauded by the audience of the Salle Favart.

ANDRÉ BOLL.

NEW-ZEALAND

DESPITE the absence of a professional theatre, New Zealand can claim that, in proportion to its population, it is one of the most theatrically-minded countries in the world. The proportion of people either engaged in theatre work, or who go to the theatre, is extremely high.

For some years there has been talk of a National Theatre, but so far the only manifestation of this ideal has been the Community Arts Service Theatre, sponsored by the Adult Education Department, which has toured plays, opera and ballet throughout the country. Last year, Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* toured for four months and visited more than eighty towns and isolated communities. Some of the places visited had never seen a play before. The company was composed of two professional directors, and New Zealand amateur players who were, however, paid at professional rates. The tour paid its way, and no subsidy was necessary. A tour of J. B. Priestley's *An Inspector Calls* followed and was likewise successful.

Every city, town and country in New Zealand has its own amateur theatre group. Some of the worthwhile plays produced recently have been *The Children's Hour* (Lillian Hellman), *Les Mains sales* (Jean-Paul Sartre), *The Glass Menagerie* (Tennessee Williams) *Exercise Bowler* (T. Atkinson), *The Rivals* (Sheridan), *You never can tell* (Shaw), *Joan of Lorraine* (Maxwell Anderson), *Diary of a Scoundrel* (Ostrovsky), *Cæsar and Cleopatra* (Shaw), *The Winter's Tale* (Shakespeare), *Charles and Mary* (Joan Temple), *The Miser* (Molière), *The Switchback* (James Bridie), *Bury the Dead* (Irwin Shaw). An arena production of *Private Lives* by Noel Coward has been the only attempt at this form of presentation to date.

Standards and the lack of qualified producers are the New Zealand theatre's two big worries. There are now

several professional producers from England working in the country, attached permanently to the larger groups. The New Zealand Drama Council, an affiliation of seventy-five groups and societies run regular schools for producers and actors. A recent ten day summer school at Napier had sixty-eight students. A full-length production called *To—night we improvise* was written, produced, acted and presented to an invited audience at the conclusion of the school. The theme was the different aspects of New Zealand history, tradition and life.

The only professional company of any merit that has visited us recently has been Robert Morley and Sophie Stewart in *Edward my Son.*

Many of New Zealand's talented amateurs are leaving the country to study in England. Three were admitted to the Old Vic School in London last year and four more have been recommended this year. The New Zealand Government have awarded two year bursaries to these students. A National Theatre, or some similar organization would bring these players back to New Zealand at the end of their training—otherwise they are lost to us.

FREDERICK FARLEY.

★ ★

UNITED KINGDOM

SINCE my last notes in "World Theatre," the British stage has had a great loss in the death of James Bridie, the dramatist whom some called the "Scottish Shaw." Bridie, who was sixty-three, died while still in full creative power. He could always be trusted to write wisely and wittily: his plays were never smudged copies of each other: Bridie's original, probing mind never ceased to look for new theatrical adventure. Usually he wrote remarkable first acts and could not sustain his inspiration to the end; but his long list of nearly forty plays has much in it that will live in stage record: *A Sleeping Clergyman*, for example; *Mr. Bolfry* and *The Anatomist.*

The London stage, after a quiet spring distinguished by a *Henry the Fifth* at the Old Vic, has now blazed into the Festival of Britain which is also a festival of the theatre. It can be said at once that this has produced, in *Anthony and Cleopatra*, the noblest Shakespearean revival for years. Sir Laurence Olivier, who presents it at the St. James's and who himself plays Antony with an exciting subtlety and command, has in his wife, Vivien Leigh, the best Cleopatra of our day: an actress who can move with ease from the allurements of the "serpent of old Nile" to the matchless close: Cleopatra's death, throned and crowned, when the glittering wanton of the early scenes has become indeed Royal Egypt. It was many years since I had known a final scene played before an audience more hushed, and the sudden gale of applause at curtain-fall was something that will stick in the memory. There is a fine cast; Michael Benthall's production and Roger Furse's sets have done much for both the *Anthony* and Shaw's *Cæsar and Cleopatra* which (a skilful choice) Sir Laurence alternates with the Shakespearean tragedy. In this Miss Leigh is the kittenish young Cleopatra, and Sir Laurence the middle-aged Julius Cæsar who meets her on a moonlit night among the poppies on the paws of the Sphinx. The double achievement at the St. James's is the crown of the theatrical year in London. I shall not forget Sir Laurence Olivier's Antony imagining how the ghosts will gaze upon the lovers, royal in death: "Dido and her Æneas shall want troops, and all the haunt be ours."

The West End also presented, within a few weeks, such major productions as revivals of *Three Sisters* and *Hassan*, and a modern piece, *Waters of the Moon* (Haymarket). It is fashionable to say that the last play, by N. C. Hunter, owes all to its cast, but this is to do small justice to a play of quality. Tchehovian in mood and method, the piece is about guests in a remote country hotel whose drab lives are unsettled by the arrival and departure of a gay, wealthy family. The visitors come, one snowy Christmas, "like swans on a duckpond:" then again they take wing and the place is left to its gloom. The title comes from a speech by a drudging daughter—very well acted by Wendy Hiller—which says, in effect: "It is not kind to make us dream of the waters of the moon, of all sorts of happinesses that are out of our reach." Dame Edith Evans acts a sophisticated, chattering woman with her usual flash; but the commanding performance is that of Dame Sybil Thorndike, here as eloquent in her silences as in her speech. She is a reserved, unhappy widow with nothing to look for but a slow fading. Dame Sybil acts exquisitely: she can call up the woman's entire past in a few sentences. This is in no sense a great play; still, it is good and poignant, and it has fitting treatment.

Three Sisters, the Tchekhov revival at the Aldwych, came out on the first night less well than we had hoped. The cast seemed to be out of rhythm; the pace lagged. There is reason to suppose that, by now, the play is making its proper effect. Many of the performances are thoroughly Tchekhovian. Sir Ralph Richardson sees the humour in Vershinin's repetitive philosophizing; Celia Johnson, Margaret Leighton, and Renée Asherson—but especially Miss Johnson—are admirable as the yearning sisters; and there is an exact and delicate performance in a secondary part (the schoolmaster, Masha's husband) by that good actor, Walter Hudd.

Hassan (Cambridge Theatre) proved to be a disappointment. James Elroy Flecker's first and less-regarded play, *Don Juan*, still seems to me to be the better. *Hassan* is written in often labouring poetic prose ; there are beautiful lines, especially in the epilogue, but the play is smothered in Oriental decoration, and only a few members of Basil Dean's cast speak with much effect. Laurence Hardy (Ishak) is one. André Huguenet is a stolid Hassan, and the Caliph and Pervaneh are both vocally insufficient.

The Old Vic season has brought a very fine Henry the Fifth (Alec Clunes) in a production (by Glen Byam Shaw) of vigour and simplicity; and an Electra (Peggy Ashcroft) in the tragedy of Sophocles, stays in the responsive mind. Stratford-upon-Avon this year is giving four of the historie in sequence. Three have been produced so far, in perma

nent framework, and the level of performance and production satisfies. Michael Redgrave's Richard the Second and Hotspur, Harry Andrew's Henry the Fourth, and Richard Burton's Prince Hal take the imagination; Anthony Quayle, though not temperamentally a Falstaff, does what understanding and stage sense can. The Stratford theatre has been largely reconstructed internally: to the general pleasure and profit, that once notorious gap between players and audience is bridged at last.

By the beginning of August there were changes in the Festival programme. Alec Guinness's *Hamlet*, fated from the first, had been withdrawn and succeeded at the New Theatre by an excellent revival of Pinero's drama, *His House in Order*, with Sir Godfrey Tearle. *A Sleep of Prisoners*, Christopher Fry's short play (a cry against war), staged in a church off Regent-street, had some of its author's verbal skill and more urgency than his previous work. And the last Festival play, Shakespeare's late romance of *The Winter's Tale* (Phœnix Theatre), was a triumph both of performance (John Gielgud's Leontes, Diana Wynyard's Hermione, Flora Robson's Paulina, in particular) and of dignified and imaginative direction by the young producer Peter Brook.

J. C. Trewin.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Looking back on the season as a whole it is cheering to be able to report an increase of activity in the theatrical center of New York. Some 84 productions have been shown along the streets that lead off Broadway and among that number more than 20 are of outstanding interest. The number compares encouragingly with that of last year when only some 60 odd plays found their way to the boards. It is important to note that this improvement in the statistics of production is due to the fact that the A. N. T. A. Play Series was launched in December and that the City Center also brought in its dramatic offering of six classic and modern revivals. That one producing unit —the A. N. T. A. Playhouse— should account for one half of the entire increase of play-production in a city the size of New York is in itself a commentary on the importance of this effort.

The subscription audience saw a Greek tragedy as interpreted by one of our leading poets—Robinson Jeffers' *The Tower beyond Tragedy* ; Ibsen's *Peer Gynt* in an American translation ; an English Fantasy, James Barrie's *Mary Rose* and finally, crowning the season, Jouvet's triumphant visit with his company in *L'Ecole des Femmes*. This last event, long and carefully prepared and made possible through the cooperation of the French Government and the United States State Department, proved a tremendous success and should prepare the way for other exchanges on the high level of artistic distinction so brilliantly exemplified by Jouvet and this troup.

A few more statistics are illuminating as a picture of the state of the theatre in the U. S. On the last day of April there were 23 theatres open in New York, some 10 companies were touring and another half dozen in rehearsal or "try-out" stages preparatory to their New York openings. Yet in the few theatres available for production in the center and market-place of the American theatre, a dozen long run plays hold sway: *Kiss me Kate* with 973 performances to its credit; *South Pacific* edging up with 836, *Gentlemen prefer Blondes* with 582. These are all musical comedies, the most popular form of theatrical entertainment in this country and one which the American theatre has brought to a high state of perfection. American musical comedy is more than just song, dance and jokes. It has become a true art form which the joint effort of highly skilled writers, musicians, artists, choreographers and directors have brought to high perfection. This year there are no less than five musical comedy hits to add to those already running, *Call me Madam* with music and lyrics by Irving Berlin and the irrepressible Ethel Merman impersonating an American lady-Ambassador to a European court is a spirited and gay entertainment; *Guys and Dolls*, a story about Broadway itself and the tough and tender hearted men and women who haunt its theatres, bars and gambling dens has that intense vitality and high spirits that are a hall-mark of the genre. With *The King and I*, the new musical play by Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II (creators of the imperishable *Oklahoma*, *Carrousel* and *South Pacific)* a quite different quality is introduced into the formula. *The King and I*, derived from a popular novel which in its turn was based on the memoires of *An English Governess at the Court of Siam* by Anna Leonowens, is a colorful and romantic picture of the Siamese court about a hundred years ago. Gertrude Lawrence and Yul Brynner in the leading roles give engaging performances but it is above all the settings, costumes and dancing that delight the eye and ear. At the other end of the world, Betty Smith's *A Tree grows in Brooklyn* has come to the stage in the form of musical comedy with score by Arthur Schwarz and George Abbott as co-author director and producer. This, with a musical version of Molnar's *The good Fairy* called *Make a Wish* by its adaptor Preston Sturges bring up to date the catalogue of the musical production which forms so important a part of the American scene.

Of this season's important new plays (all openings have of course been listed in "World Premieres") there have been at least three since the last issue of "World Theatre" went to press. Tennessee William's *The Rose Tatoo*, a lusty evocation of Latin temperament transplanted to a Sicilian settlement on the Florida Gulf coast; *Billy Budd* a dramatization of Melville's novel of the same name, and *The Little Blue Light* by Edmond Wilson a curious excursion into a not too impossible future—the last of the A. N. T. A. Play series. All these are plays of intrinsic interest and merit, and, added to the successes already on the board,

indicate a healthy state of dramatic writing even though so many difficulties lie in the way of the practitioner of the gentle art.

Off Broadway there is a constant effervescence of activity. Though the U. S. does not have the resident stock companies so prevalent on the continent nor the repertory companies of England, it has an enormous number of college and university theatres and a growing drive toward the creation of permanent professional companies in the larger cities. Dallas Theatre '51 has often been mentioned as an example of the new tendency. It has produced half a dozen new plays this year as well as revivals. The Pasadena Playhouse experiments constantly with new scripts. In Houston, Texas, a new, charming "theatre-in-the-round" has been opened with great success operating on a professional basis and giving a variety of plays, including the first professional production in the U. S. A. of Sean O'Casey's *Red Roses for Me*. This movement toward the resident, permanent company is the most promising sign of the times; it is a hope of the future.

The second International Theatre Month, sponsored by A. N. T. A. and the National Commission for U. N. E. S. C. O. once more focused the attention of players, producers and public on the value of the theatre as a means of international understanding. In 1950 some 475 theatre groups throughout the country took part in a nation-wide demonstration of the theatre's international power and scope; this year the number has increased 600 or more. A continuous and wide spread interest in this method of participation in international cultural activities has been shown by the prompt response of many college and community theatres throughout the country. Leading newspapers have carried stories on the subject and radio and television programs emphasized the theatre's service to international understanding and good will.

The interest in the International Theatre Institute is growing and A. N. T. A. has continued its support both financially and through its many activities and services in spite of heavy national obligations and the increasing pressure of world events.

ROSAMOND GILDER.

★ ★

U. S. S. R.

THE KHAMSA THEATRE AT TASHKENT

When foreigners refer to the Soviet theatre it is usually with Moscow or Leningrad in mind, but this is to lose sight of the fact that a taste for the theatre has spread like a trail of gunpowder in all the republics of the Soviet Union, and that tens and hundreds of companies lead their separate lives in the remotest towns, from lush Ukraine to harsh Mongolia and from the polar sphere to the Caucasus.

To-day we should like to tell the story of one of these theatres, and faced with an embarrassing variety of choice we have selected that region of gardens, carpets and legends, Tashkent.

A. D. S. R.

SEVERAL companies provide entertainment for the audiences of Tashkent, capital of the Soviet Socialist Republic of Uzbekistan. Besides the regular Theatre, there is one for Opera and ballet, another for musical comedy, yet another for young people, and a marionnette theatre for children. The best known of these is undoubtedly the Khamsa Theatre, which this year celebrates its thirtieth anniversary.

In the very first years of Soviet rule in Central Asia a talented group of young people founded a dramatic circle in Tashkent. It was directed by Khamsa Niazi, and its dramatist and producer was Mannon-Ouigour. It soon attained real stature and was sent to Moscow to train at the Vakhtangov studio. When their course was completed, these young people returned to Uzbekistan, and constituted the first professional theatre there.

They began by giving very simple plays and ended by challenging Gogol, Ostrovski, Molière and Lope de Vega. At the same time works from the modern Soviet repertory were performed: *The Revolt*, drawn from a novel by Fourmanov, Pogodine's *Man with a Gun* and plays by Uzbek writers such as Yachen's *Two Communists* and *The Offensive* by Yan.

In 1937 a decade of Uzbek art was held in Moscow which marked a turning point in the career of the Khamsa company. Apart from the success of its performances it was decorated with the Order of Lenin.

In the years which followed the company presented, among other works, *The Bey and the Journeyman* (a play by Khamsa which shows the life of the Uzbek people under the Tsarist yoke), Gorki's *Yegor Boulitchov*, Ostrovski's *The Storm*, Lermontov's *The Mascarade* and Shakespeare's *Othello*.

But the plays most unanimously applauded are those which tell of the struggle of the men of Uzbekistan against one-time prejudice. The favourite plays of the Uzbeks are *Nourkhan* and *Gulsare* which both treat of a young girl's fight to achieve her independance, the former to become a singer, and the latter to tear herself from the peasant family circle and become a qualified worker.

Among plays directly inspired by the 1939-1945 war, the Khamsa theatre produced with success N. Svetlov's *The Gates of Brandenburg*, Boris Lavrenev's *For those at Sea*; *Moukhabba* and *The Story of a Life*. The last two named are by Uzbek authors, Touigoun and Ouigoun.

In the production of such works as Simonov's *The Russian Question* and Ostrovski's *Poor Bride* the Khamsa Theatre have shown their proficiency.

The Government has recognized the merits of the theatre and the best actors of its company have been proclaimed Artists of the People, or Emeritus Artists of the Republic of Uzbekistan. The actress, S. Ichantouraeva, a former agricultural worker, has been elected a deputy of the Supreme Soviet of Uzbekistan.

The Khamsa Theatre makes regular tours in the principal towns of the republic; Samarkand, Ferghana, Bokhara, etc., as well as tours in the sister republics, where theatrical life has developed in a similar manner.

TATIANA YAZYKOVA.

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